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An Exploratory Study of Early Adolescent Males' Perceptions of Significant Others, and How They Coped with Emotions Evoked

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EARLY ADOLESCENT MALES' PERCEPTIONS OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS, AND HOW THEY COPED WITH THE EMOTIONS EVOKED

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study, and its purposes, are rooted in self-concept/self-esteem theory.[1] Significant others and regulation of emotions, especially those generated in important interactions with significant others, are two basic variables in self-concept theory. More specifically, it is believed that if we know more about these two important dimensions of adolescent self-functioning, that is, interrelationships with significant others and self-regulation of emotions, we will have valuable knowledge to assist in refining our understanding of the adolescent and in helping him[2] in the development of healthy self-regard/self-esteem.

Background Germane to This Study

In Regard to Significant Others

The study of adolescents' significant others has been investigated by a different group of researchers and has a different research history than does the study of self-regulation of emotions.

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[1]Throughout this study "self-regard/self-esteem" are presented in that manner, reflecting the author's belief that they are in actuality, interrelated components--the cognitive and the affective self-perceptions--and part of a wholistic self-system.

[2]Since this study involves only male subjects, the masculine pronouns will be used throughout, even though the statement might be applicable to either gender.

Since the seminal work of Cooley in 1912, researchers have studied the significant others of adolescents, and a variety of factors associated with such persons.

In the late 1970s Wylie (1979) presented a comprehensive review of the study of various dimensions of the self. In concluding, she questioned why so little research had been directed at the relationship between the developing self of the child and his significant others, in light of its importance (pp. 336-37). In 1983 Harter published an extensive review of theory and research related to the self. She noted that little attention had been given to the study of the self as a process and as an active agent. She urged increased developmental study of all aspects of the self and improved understanding about how self-dimensions are defined at different developmental levels (p. 277).

Other researchers reported similar findings and expressed the need for similar kinds of research. Greenberg, Siegel, and Leitch (1983) concluded that the quality of attachments to significant others was "an important variable throughout the lifespan." They noted, however, that little research had focused on the effects of these intimate attachments in adolescence (pp. 373-74). Gecas and Schwalbe (1986) made a similar point in advocating a more complete understanding of the relationship between parental behavior and adolescent self-esteem and the influence of esteem-enhancing experiences beyond the immediate family. Blyth, Hill, and Thiel (1982) noted the same omissions and suggested expanding the research to describe the composition of the adolescents' broader social world. Like Blyth et al. (1982), Reid, Landesman, Treder, and Jaccad (1989) saw a need for more

"systematic inquiry into the nature and consequences of the child's support systems" (p. 896).

The varied studies of other researchers identified the reciprocal interaction between self-regard and other social variables such as situational factors, other-perceptions, and interactive patterns (see Gordon & Gergen, 1986; Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Wells, 1976).

The majority of the earlier studies on significant others, however, were carried out in ways that evoked criticism from some of the current group of psychologists. These criticisms had to do with the instruments used, the frame of reference in both approach and interpretation, the contacts with subjects (e.g., single, formal, group contacts), and the ways in which the results were quantified and reported (i.e., in statistical and abstract terms). This made it difficult to know more about the specific behaviors involved and to operationalize the findings for people who wanted to enhance their relationships with important adolescent others (see Juhasz, 1985, pp. 878-79). Rosenberg (1979) identified this issue as a "neglected area" (p. 279). While researchers had often elicited these specific qualities and characteristics, they overlooked them and combined their findings "in search of an underlying common dimension of global self-esteem" (p. 279). But specific factors are also important in "broadening our vision and going beyond self-esteem. . . . It is also important to know what [subject] thinks of such <u>specific</u> qualities" (pp. 278-79).

<u>In Regard to Self-Regulation of Emotions</u>

In contrast, the study of emotions in general, including

research related to how children and adolescents regulate emotions, had for many years received little research attention. As part of her overview of the subject of the self-concept, Harter (1983) noted that although self-esteem typically referred to one's feelings about one's self, "Little attention had been devoted to the specific role of affect, despite the historical precedent and works of James and Cooley" (p. 236). (See also, Band & Weisz, 1988; Bretherton, Fritz, Zahn-Waxler, & Ridgeway, 1986; Compas, 1987; Campos, Barrett, Zamb, Goldsmith, & Sternberg, 1983; Dodge, 1989; Franko, Powers, & Zuroff, 1985; Hesse & Cicchetti, 1982; Kopp, 1989; Stark, Spirito, Williams, & Guevremont, 1989; Yarrow, 1980; Zimiles, 1981.) Kopp (1989), Campos et al. (1983), and Dodge (1989) described it as a "neglected" topic but observed that in recent years there had been a "dramatic reevaluation of the importance of emotion, its consequence, and its development from infancy to old age" (p. 787).

Leventhal and Tomarken (1986) reviewed the central themes and problems in the major areas of emotion research. They noted the diversity of theoretical perspectives but regarded this diversity as necessary. They identified emotions and interpersonal communication as areas of study that could "greatly enrich our understanding of human behavior" (pp. 598-601). Barrett and Campos (1987) suggested that future research provide more knowledge about the internal, regulatory effects of different emotions and give more attention to action tendencies associated with various emotional patterns.

Psychological theorists and researchers who focused on the affective sphere believed that the capacity for self-regulation of

emotions was an essential component in good self-regard/self-esteem and a vital component in adaptive and effective social interaction. (See Bandura, 1977; Barrett & Campos, 1987; Dodge, 1989; Emde, 1983; Kohut & Wolf, 1978; Kopp, 1989; Rosenberg, 1979.)

In Regard to Methodology

While these two interrelated topics, significant others and emotional self-regulation, have different research histories, and have been given different research treatments by two different groups of psychologists, both research groups advocated a similar approach for studying both types of self-phenomena and provided similar rationale to support their methods. They maintained that in order to get at the personal meaning of the subjects' self-experiences, one must structure one's approach to elicit this information directly from the subjects--the self-report method (Wylie, 1979, p. 697). These researchers recognized the limitations and criticisms of this subject-centered approach, but maintained that it was the way to develop personal meaning and that it could be combined "with the goals of science" (Damon & Hart, 1988, p. 80). Various potential biases could be minimized, for example, by the careful construction of questions, and by the use of a trained and experienced interviewer. The challenge of this approach was in handling the derived data, how to preserve its meaning, and how to derive meaning from it. Researchers like Jackson (1984), Miles and Huberman (1986), and Juhasz (1989) presented guidelines.

Previous research also provided ideas and specific methods for organizing and analyzing data about both significant others and self-regulation of emotion. (See, for example, Band & Weisz, 1988; Blyth et

al., 1982; Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Compas, 1987; Franko et al., 1985; Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Offer, Ostrov, & Howard, 1981; Offer, Ostrov, Howard, & Atkinson, 1988; Reid et al., 1989.)

In summary, an examination of previous related works revealed that a group of theorists and researchers had established the important contribution of significant others and of self-regulation of emotions to psychological and social well-being of the person (adolescent), that these two variables are mutually interactive, and that there is need for various research efforts aimed at expanding understanding in these realms.

Research Related to Study Variables

In Regard to Significant Others

Research efforts have consistently demonstrated the willingness and ability of adolescents to respond to questions about the persons in their lives who are most important to them, to talk about their various internal states, and to provide valuable insights. (See, for example, Juhasz, 1989; L'Ecuyer, 1981; Offer et al., 1981, 1988.) Research has also examined the reported perceptions of adolescents in contrast to those of pre-adolescents. (See Bandura, 1977; Burns, 1979; Harter, 1983; L'Ecuyer, 1981; Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Montemayor & Eisen, 1977; Petersen, 1981; Rosenberg, 1979; and Seman, 1980.)

There is an extensive body of research demonstrating the relationship between the adolescents' perceptions of significant others and the adolescents' levels of self-regard/self-esteem. (See Demo, Small, & Savin-Williams, 1987; Felson, & Zielinski, 1989; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Gordon & Gergen, 1968; Greenberg et al., 1983; Harter,

1983; Openshaw, Thomas, & Rollins, 1984; Rosenberg, 1979; Shraugher & Schoeneman, 1979; and Wylie, 1979.)

Studies, often by some of these same researchers, have examined and reported on who the adolescents selected as their significant others, both adults and peers. (See Blyth et al., 1982; Burns, 1979; Felson & Zielinski, 1989; Galbo, 1983; Greenberg et al., 1983; Harter, 1983; Reid et al., 1989; and Rosenberg, 1979.)

Rosenberg (1979), established some basic principles that influenced "significance." Other researchers, over the last thirty years, have also studied the qualities of significant others that related to their special influence on the developing self of the adolescent. (See Burns, 1979; Demo et al., 1987; Felson & Zielinski, 1989; Galbo, 1983; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Harter, 1983; Kohut & Wolf, 1978; Openshaw et al., 1984; and Rosenberg, 1979.) Some of these same researchers found that such variables as quality of relationship with significant other, self-needs, issues of the moment, age and gender of the adolescent also influenced how significant others were perceived and used by the adolescent. In general, these important others derived their significance, and thereby contributed to the enhancement of self-regard/self-esteem, because of their perceived support of various kinds, their involvement and participation with the adolescent, and their approach to handling (i.e., respecting) the adolescent's autonomy/ freedom. Terms such as "unaffectionate, coercive, vacillating, critical" were used to identify qualities of significant others that were perceived as diminishing of self-regard/self-esteem.

In Regard to Emotions

Since the research interest in emotional life and emotional self-regulation is relatively recent, the studies, particularly those that relate to children and adolescents, are not abundant. The findings of the researchers (see Band & Weisz, 1988; Compas, 1987; Dodge, 1989; Franko et al., 1985; Harter, 1983; King, 1973; Rosenberg, 1979; Stark et al., 1989) who studied the issues were focused on the emotional states and emotions of the normal adolescent, how they coped with these emotions, and the variables that influenced coping strategies. The data from these studies were categorized and examined in terms of three approaches to coping--problem focused, emotion focused, and "other" strategies (e.g., resignation or relinquishment).

A review of the research efforts that have studied adolescents' significant others and adolescents' regulation of emotional life reveals that the efforts have been fruitful in yielding new insights. Yet, as Juhasz (1989) noted, "We have much to learn about what it is that earns the status of significant other . . . what are the resulting emotions and cognitions . . . the attributes, characteristics, and behaviors?" (pp. 584, 592).

Basic Theory and Assumptions

This study was based upon certain theoretical and conceptual issues and assumptions. Major contributors were Wylie (1979), Rosenberg (1979), Burns (1979), Kohut (1971, 1973, 1977, 1978), Watkins (1972, 1978), Shavelson and Bolus (1982), Offer et al., (1981), Harter (1983), and Juhasz (1985, 1989). These basic findings, theories, and assumptions about the self and components of the self were as follows:

1. The self can be studied in terms of static qualities or dynamic processes and in terms of specific and more global dimensions.

2. The self can be looked at in terms of its social exterior, that is, its ways of interacting with the external world, or in terms of its internal, psychological experiences and processes.

3. The self has its own developmental process and undergoes developmental changes throughout the life cycle.

4. It has two basic interrelated components, self-knowledge and self-evaluation (cognition), and self-esteem (emotions).

5. The self is "object-relational." That is, it is developed through experiences, essentially social interactions with significant others.

6. Attitudes and behaviors of significant others toward the self can be identified with and incorporated into the self. They then represent certain attitudes and behaviors that one part of the self maintains toward another facet of its being.

7. The self is hierarchically organized. It is an organization of parts, pieces, and components that are related in complex ways.

8. To appreciate the significance of a specific self-concept component, one must recognize the importance or centrality of that component to the individual.

9. The self also has a motivational component, that is, for esteem and consistency.

10. Certain affects (e.g., shame, humiliation, gradations of anger) are only aroused in relation to the self. They reflect the reaction of the self to real or imagined depreciation and/or hurt. (See Kohut, 1973.)

11. Aspects of self can be "split off," unconscious, yet very influential.

12. While significant others and self-regulation of emotions can be regarded as separate entities and examined as such, in reality they are interrelated and part of a holistic response. Interactions with, and reactions to significant others are interrelated with emotions aroused by and associated with those important others.

13. Perceptions of significant others, emotional experiences and relationships with them, the self-regulation of those emotions and of those interrelationships are all vital factors in (good) self-regard/self-esteem.

Purpose and Approach

This study had two main purposes: (a) to elicit from a group of adolescent boys their selection of their significant adults and peers, and to determine what it was about these significant persons--what they represented, how they behaved and interacted, what functions they fulfilled, as perceived by the adolescent--that accorded them their significance; (b) to study specific emotional reactions of the subject (e.g., anger, hurt, pride, tension) as they were aroused in interpersonal experiences, and explore how the adolescent boy attempted to deal with and regulate these internal, affective experiences.

The approach developed for this study combined methods used by various researchers (e.g., clinicians and traditional psychological researchers) who had studied significant others and the self-regulation of emotions. This approach carefully took into account the methodologies of previous investigators and attempted to avoid some of the pitfalls and limitations of previous studies and specific methodologies. Yet it recognized that no "best" approach had been identified; that the findings from diverse approaches had often been in accord and generally easy to synthesize. As Grusec and Lytton (1988) asserted, "If the picture that emerges about a given phenomenon is consistent, no matter what methodological technique has been employed, then our faith in the reliability and validity of the findings becomes stronger" (p. 75).

The theories and findings that were reviewed had their limitations. First they were often presented in general, abstract form (e.g., "tolerant . . . unaffectionate . . . good relationships"). This

made it difficult to know what, specifically, subjects had in mind and difficult to translate in dynamic interactions with adolescents. Second, many of these studies did not provide, and often were not intended to provide, differentiated information about how these functions were manifested at specific developmental phases. The theories, concepts, and findings of Kohut (1971, 1977, 1984) are a case in point. They were an important influence in the decision to pursue this study and the emphasis that it took. While Kohut made valuable contributions to clinical theory and practice with his (re)formulations of self-development, his work did not investigate how these generic self-functions were manifested and enacted at specific developmental stages. To develop that information seemed a challenging and worthwhile endeavor.

These, then, were the influences that contributed to the specific development of this study: the works of Kohut, the mind-set and particular professional interest (i.e., early adolescence) of the researcher, and the stated purposes of the study. These two self-topics--the characteristics and functions of significant others and the self-regulation of emotions--had been identified in the literature as needing further study using varied research approaches.

Early adolescence was selected because it is a controversial and challenging developmental period. There continued to be debate in the literature about the degree to which self and interpersonal conflict is a normal part of this stage of development. Most self-theorists did concur, that to the degree that instability in self-concept was present, it was more likely to be characteristic of this stage (Petersen, 1981,

pp. 193-94; Rosenberg, 1979, pp. 227-36).

The study of the literature revealed the shortcomings, limitations, and criticisms of earlier approaches, and current researchers had provided the principles and rationale for a more subject-centered approach. Because of the purposes of this study, and unlike most previous investigations, it seemed advisable, methodologically sound, and potentially fruitful to see the subjects over a series of interviews. Such an approach, if handled skillfully, was likely to generate more developed, in-depth information. It would allow both subjects and interviewer the opportunity to further develop responses. This study also had a unique and important available resource--the skills of a trained, experienced interviewer who had worked extensively with early adolescents. Researchers like Damon and Hart (1988) advocated the use of a skilled interviewer as a way of providing needed flexibility while preserving scientific objectivity, and as a way to diminish bias and enhance meaning.

It was this constellation of study variables that made for the overall uniqueness and potential value of this research effort. These variables encompassed the specific self-topics and the purposes of this study, the particular developmental period being examined (i.e., early adolescence), the subject-centered interview method and series of ongoing interviews, and the use of a trained, experienced interviewer to conduct the study. There was reason to believe that such an approach would produce <u>specific</u> knowledge, helpful to the significant others in "know(ing) how to increase their significance potential" toward

"influencing self-esteem and behavior . . . for directing young people. . . ." (Juhasz, 1989, p. 583).

Method

The methodology of this study was influenced by the thinking of researchers like Offer et al. (1981) who believed that one's approach should depend on what one is trying to accomplish. "If certain types of more in-depth psychological information is sought, then a certain alliance must be established" (p. 205). They concluded, from their extensive experience, that both scientific and emphatic approaches were equally good ways to study the self (p. 29).

Subjects and Subject Selection

Subjects of this study were early adolescent males, 12 to 15 years old, selected from a clinical practice group, a junior high school, and a church youth group. All the subjects were Caucasian, from similar socioeconomic and educational backgrounds and resided in the suburbs of a major midwestern city. They attended junior high schools or high schools that were regarded as top quality educational institutions.

Prior to their being accepted for the study, the boys and their parents had been informed of the nature and purpose of the research, and parental consent was obtained. The boys were seen at a regular, confidential, meeting place, at the sites from which they had been referred. They were seen for a series of at least three, weekly, individual interviews.

Instrumentation

The interview format, "On Significant Others" (see Appendix A), was the framework for introducing the subjects to the questions related to the purposes of the study. This format was composed of thirty-six carefully constructed, open-ended questions.[1]

The primary "instrumentation" of this study, however, was the professional self of the researcher, his twenty-five-plus years of training, experience, and developed skill at interviewing adolescents. The functions of the interviewer were as follows: to facilitate a comfortable working relationship, to systematically present the format questions, to use clinical judgment in deciding when and how to encourage further elaboration or clarification, and to record responses and additional observations on the data sheet constructed for this study.

After completing the questions on the format, the interviewer administered the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Scale was added to the approach to provide another source of information that might later prove useful as a supplement to the data obtained from the interview format.

Conceptualization and Presentation of Data

This research study and the approach to handling the data of the

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[1]There is question A and question B. The subjects are asked questions 1 through 6 concerning their two choices for A and their two choices for B (total--26 questions). There are a remaining 10 questions on the format. Total inquiry--36 questions.

study was accurately and succinctly summarized by Livesley and Bromley (1973).

> The present studies are directed toward the collection of descriptive data from . . . subjects; the underlying preconceptions [are] minimal, and the whole enterprise exploratory. The definition and isolation of key variables are the end result rather than the starting point of the exercise. . . . (p. 71)

Researchers like Jackson (1984) and Miles and Huberman (1986) recognized, however, the challenge and difficulty inherent in such a study in conceptualizing the data and maximizing its meaning. Miles and Huberman provided a helpful directive. "The creation, testing, and revision of simple, practical, and effective analysis methods is the highest priority for a qualitative researcher" (p. 17).

Previous researchers used various specific methods for organizing their data and deriving meaning from it. (In regard to handling data related to significant others see Blyth et al., 1982; Demo et al., 1987; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Offer et al., 1981; Openshaw et al., 1984; Reid et al., 1989; and Rosenberg, 1979. In regard to data related to emotional-regulation see Band & Weisz, 1988; Carver et al., 1989; Compas, 1987; Franko et al., 1985; King, 1973; and Stark et al., 1989.) This information was available for selective adaptation and/or modification when relevant for organizing and interpreting the data of this study.

In summary, the approach to the data was directed by two specific considerations: first, to let the key variables emerge from the data; second, to keep the main questions and purposes of the study in focus as the individual questions were analyzed and interpreted. Each question was then systematically examined in terms of what it could

reveal about these two issues. Methods used by previous researchers to organize and interpret their data were considered. The objective was to derive "simple, practical, and effective ways of organizing the data" (Miles & Huberman, 1986, p. 17).

Limitations of the Study

Researchers like Burns (1979), Combs (1981), Miles and Huberman (1986), Kerlinger (1973), presented the concerns about, and potential weaknesses in, such a methodological approach. The data, for example, was to be derived via self-reports. These early adolescent subjects were asked to share personal areas of themselves with an adult-other. How able, willing, and honest would they be in responding? The subjects would be reflecting on persons and situations in retrospect, and asked to perceive and recall various reactions to these important persons and events. There were concerns in regard to accuracy--in recording responses, and when combining and grouping of the data for further analysis. As Miles and Huberman (1986) pointed out, in qualitative research "there are no canons, decision rules, algorithms, or even any agreed upon heuristics" (p. 230). This requires both creativity and professional self-discipline on the part of the researcher. As is true in most qualitative research, the sole investigator becomes a "one-person research machine" and this situation has both its advantages and disadvantages (p. 230).

There were other limitations inherent in this approach, with this particular instrument, and with the composition of the group. There was the question of how effectively this approach and particular interview format would provide data that satisfied the purposes of the

study. Would the outcome satisfy the objectives and justify the effort? The reported perceptions, for example, of the behavior of a significant other toward the self would not necessarily reveal how prevalent the particular interaction was, nor the impact and/or degree of influence, short-term and long-term, that it had upon the self-regard/self-esteem of the subjects. The subjects were not randomly selected, were from homogeneous backgrounds, and were limited in number. It was, however, an exploratory study and broad generalizations were not in line with the purposes or approach of the study.

These concerns and limitations, and ways to control for them, will be discussed more fully in Chapter II and Chapter III. But as Miles and Huberman (1986) and Kerlinger (1973) emphasized, "These difficulties are really potential weaknesses--none of them need to be a real weakness" (p. 408) if recognized and provided for by building in proper procedures and safeguards.

Summary

This study was designed to provide additional and specific in-depth information about how the early adolescent perceived important aspects of his relationships with significant others and how he went about attempting to regulate related emotional states. Related research efforts were reviewed and the strengths and weaknesses of various methods were taken into account in designing the approach of this study. The study was based on the belief that sound but varied research approaches were applicable and could contribute valuable insight to such investigations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This study can be viewed as a compilation of the following four major but interrelated topics: (a) the rationale for and the methodological approach being taken; (b) the study of perceptions--their relationship to self-regard/self-esteem and their manifestation in early adolescence; (c) the study of significant others in early adolescence--who they are, how they are perceived, and what makes them significant; (d) the study of the regulation of emotions--its reciprocal interrelationship with self-esteem and significant others, and its development and manifestation in early adolescence. Each of these major topic areas will be reviewed in terms of its unique research history and its specific contributions to this study.

Rationale for, and Approaches to the Study of Self-Phenomenon

As Harter (1983) pointed out, "No one holds a theoretical corner on the market of the self. Moreover there are still many corners yet to be explored" (p. 367). There are "many ways of knowing, many kinds of knowers" and we cannot afford to "turn our backs on any opportunities to enhance our knowledge" (Hartman, 1990, p. 4).

Trying to study people, however, introduces considerations

different from those of the physical sciences. People cannot be studied in a social vacuum because as Bronfenbrenner noted, "They have a nasty habit of immediately filling vacuums with meaning" (Grusec & Lytton, 1988, p. 57). These same authors advocated studying behavior in context and offered some reminders concerning the present state of social science research in general and methodology in particular. Naturalistic approaches are not the answer to the research dilemma; each methodology has its advantages as well as its disadvantages. Researchers will continue to refine and develop approaches. Debate is healthy; it causes investigators to reconsider their assumptions and approaches. In diversity lies strength (p. 75).

Allen-Mears and Lane (1990) expressed similar ideas. They pointed out that research dealing with "complex social reality . . . reality filled with concrete acts and symbolic meanings" requires various and different paradigms that can offer unique views of the social world. They maintained that the clinician-researcher must realize that different paradigms are not incompatible, that one paradigm is not superior to another. In their opinion, what is required is "an effective combination of the most valuable features of each; to begin skillfully integrating the most valuable elements of both" (pp. 452-58).

Some authors have been critical of some of the approaches to studies of self-phenomenon. In her studies on methodology, Juhasz (1985, 1989) outlined her objections. Most of the information derived from such studies was obtained through the use of preset questions and instruments that were based on adult assumptions. Some of the areas

that were examined may not have been vital to the self of the subjects; other ares that were more vital may have been omitted. Many of these approaches and measures failed to take into consideration individual factors. Juhasz (1985) observed that the approaches that had been taken provided "only broad general information and failed to identify the specifics unique to the population of interest and which may be crucial to understanding the persons in that group" (p. 877). At the time of her study there were no measures to determine the characteristics, attributes, skills, and abilities on which individuals' self-esteem was based (pp. 877-79).

Rosenberg (1979) expressed similar ideas in advocating that the researcher attempt to get at the internal perceptions and internal meaning to the subject of the particular external component, person, or event, and "study more specifically the conditions under which these perceived attributes take place and what they are" (p. 97).

Other psychologists who have done work in these areas have asserted the importance of getting this kind of information and understanding directly from the subjects, for example, by asking them. (See Burns, 1979; Compas, 1987; Franko et al., 1985; Juhasz, 1985; Lane & Schwartz, 1987; L'Ecuyer, 1981; Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Mischel, 1977; Offer et al., 1981, 1988; Reid et al., 1989; Rosenberg, 1979; and Wylie, 1974, 1979.) Many of the researchers in this group have demonstrated that children and adolescents can provide this important information about their selves. The extensive work of Livesley and Bromley on Person Perception in Childhood and Adolescence (1973), the experience of Offer et al. (1981), and the findings of L'Ecuyer (1981),

from his work at the Self-Concept Research Laboratory, demonstrated that, "Children's own verbalizations can fruitfully be analyzed as important indices in learning about the development and the internal organization of their selves" (p. 212). Mischel (1977) found, from his empirical work on cognition and behavior, that "research suggests that the individual generally is capable of being his . . . own best assessor; that the person's own self-statements tend to be at least as good as the more indirect and costly appraisals of sophisticated tests and clinicians" (p. 253). As a part of their research, Mischel (1979) and his group used structured interview techniques to conduct developmental studies of how children conceived their self-regulatory processes (p. 749).

Researchers also recognized the necessity of formulating appropriate research questions, questions that would evoke subjects' responses (Juhasz, 1989). Like Juhasz, Damon and Hart (1988) and Lane and Schwartz (1987) found that the research method must provide some structure but need not pose undue restrictions on responses.

Most of the researchers studied (e.g., Burns, 1979; Damon & Hart, 1988; Franko et al., 1985; Jackson, 1984; and Offer et al., 1981) believed that the self-report method, combined "with the goals of science," were the approaches of choice. Offer et al. (1981, 1988) in their

> studies of thousands of adolescents, used no projective tests, hidden cameras, experimental manipulations. We simply asked teenagers . . . to tell us about themselves. . . . This [work] is evidence that adolescents, when approached as persons and listened to, can and will share a great deal of their subjective feelings. (pp. 128-29)

Damon and Hart (1988) believed that such an approach is "essential for

the kind of basic, developmental spade work called for" (p. 82). Burns (1979) maintained that, "Self-report techniques are literally the only method available for measuring [parts of] the self-concept, and if they are to be rejected, then psychology would be seriously limited" (p. 70).

A variety of approaches to self-reporting were employed in the studies above. They included retrospective reports, self-report measures, clinical interviews, written responses to open-ended questions, responses to standardized emotion-evoking situations, and combinations of some of these approaches. Allen-Meares and Lane (1990) presented a list of quantitative data collection techniques and a summary of each (p. 453).

Damon and Hart (1988) discussed the support for such approaches. They reviewed the several defenses that have been made for the scientific credibility of this method (see p. 78). They believed that an approach, based on self-reporting of subjects, allowed for the flexibility required when studying such phenomenon. When researchers adhere to the more strict methods of natural science, they do so at the expense of meaning. True scientific control is still maintained by "well-guided flexibility rather than an arbitrary standardization of procedure." Such approaches "provide truer scientific accounts of children's developing understanding than do standardized questionnaires or tests" (pp. 78-79).

Jackson (1984) also argued against the experimental method when studying phenomena having to do with the self. He believed that such phenomenon are defined by their meaning and not by their causal structure. The experimental method is analytic and does not explore the

"natural contours of meaning" (pp. 5-7).

Reid et al. (1989) are in accord with the other researchers in emphasizing the importance of "children's subjective appraisal." But they believed that in order to get reliable data that could be compared across subjects, a psychometrically sound instrument was essential (p. 896). They entered their investigation believing that children are "notoriously difficult to interview," but later came to the conclusion that children "do have the ability to participate in semi-structured dialogue . . . and demonstrated sustained attention during the interview process" (p. 906).

This group of experienced researchers recognized, however, the criticisms and shortcomings of such approaches. These criticisms usually focused on observer bias, the limitations of introspection, various issues related to validity and reliability, the "lack of precision and measurement" (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 408) and the unreliability of self-report approaches. Miles and Huberman (1986) found that often researchers "don't act like scientists," that is, "they don't keep track of frequencies, make probablistic estimates, sample representatively, or make accurate deductions" (p. 230). They presented twelve tactics for establishing, checking, and confirming conclusions (pp. 231-43). Burns identified five factors that influence reliability in self-report approaches. They included subjects' willingness to share intimate information about the self, levels of self-awareness and self-expression, social expectancies brought to the situation, feelings of personal adequacy and comfortableness, and tendencies to acquiescence. Burns suggested including both positively and negatively worded items as

a way of minimizing acquiescence (p. 75). Combs (1981) discussed similar concerns and limitations but believed that the self-report approach was not acceptable for assessment of self-concept (pp. 6-7). He did conclude that perceptual variables, like self-concept, could be successfully explored by inferential techniques and "could be successfully made from remarkably small samples" (p. 11). This is possible because of the pervasive effect of self-concept on behavior, according to Combs (pp. 6-11).

Another way to diminish researcher bias, provide for an optimum response set, better develop specifics (as advocated by Burns, 1979; Juhasz, 1979; and Rosenberg, 1979), and "enhance meaning," is to have the study conducted by a trained, experienced interviewer, according to Damon and Hart (1988). Such persons would have developed skill in the use of "probing questions" after initial responses by subjects, while still being able to stay within the parameters of the study. They recognized that clinical interviewing takes time, talent, and training to master but "is essential for the kind of basic developmental spade work required" (p. 80).

Mills and Huberman (1986) and Jackson (1984) presented support and rationale for pursuing qualitative research and recognized the inherent problems. Such approaches create methodological and analytical difficulties when conceptualizing the meaning of what is discovered. Approaches can be either too reductionist or anti-reductionist. The former "is respectfully analytic but looses sight of the coherent sense of the self . . . while the latter approach is adequately synthetic but fails to investigate the structure of the phenomenon." The data should

be examined as "a complex construction but at the same time preserved as an account of the person's life" (pp. 9-10).

Various approaches to organizing data were used by some of the researchers. Offer et al. (1981) found that the information about the self, obtained from their studies, could be clustered into five areas: the psychological, social, familial, sexual, and the coping self. Livesley and Bromley (1973) developed the following categories to organize the trait names that adolescents used to describe their perceptions of others: mood and temperament, generosity, humor, conceit, sociability, talkativeness, control over others, evaluations, intellectual ability, miscellaneous (pp. 172-77). Rosenberg (1979) organized his data, concerning the self and others, in terms of certain abilities and talents, personality traits, social structure, physical and bodily factors, and social network. Juhasz (1985) reported that the data from her study could be fitted into the first four of these categories (p. 883). Reid et al. (1989) structured their study of social support into emotional, informational, instructional (e.g., direct help), and affiliative (e.g., companionship) areas. Blyth et al. (1982) categorized their data concerning significant others in terms of advice, modeling, and intimacy (pp. 425-49).

This review of the literature revealed several themes. The controversy between experiment versus observation and description continues (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). There is, however, movement toward and recognition of the value of a variety of new methodological approaches. In order to discover meanings of persons and events to the subjects, the researcher must use other approaches than the traditional

experimental. In order to derive such personal meanings, the subjects themselves must provide the information. It has been demonstrated that adolescents can respond to such an approach and can provide important data. Such an approach has been and can be supported scientifically. Like any other method/approach, this one has its strengths, limitations, and criticisms. The challenge of such an approach resides in establishing the best way to analyze the data and conceptualize meaning.

Approaches to, and Methods for Studying Emotional Processes

What has been stated and summarized concerning the rationale for, and approach to the study of self-phenomena, also applies to the group of researchers who have studied emotional processes and self-regulation of emotions. Franko et al. (1984), Campos (1987), and Band and Weisz (1988) also recognized the methodological limitations and criticisms of the interview method, but believed that it was the best way to gain insight into the subjects' capacity for affective self-regulation. As a way of doing this, Franko et al. (1984) used a free response approach rather than a forced choice format and asked subjects how they handled negative emotions.

Two other approaches were described by Lane and Schwartz (1987) and Stark et al. (1989). Lane and Schwartz presented their subjects with standardized emotion-evoking situations and asked them to describe how they felt in such situations. The authors believed that this method helped to determine the level of emotional experience. Stark et al. (1989) asked the adolescents to select a personal problem to be examined. These authors were critical of methodologies that relied on

schedules and instruments and ended up capturing "adult-defined and non-normative life experiences."

Some researchers developed models for examining emotional regulation and coping. All of these models looked at coping in terms of attempts to modify both the internal and external worlds. Franko et al. (1985) established four categories: active versus passive, cognitive versus behavioral, self-oriented versus other-oriented, and verbalized versus non-verbalized (pp. 212-13). Band and Weisz (1988) used conceptualizations of how adults cope with emotions to examine the ways that children coped. Responses were coded as "primary" or "secondary" coping or as "relinquished control." With primary control coping the subjects attempted to deal with the source of the problem, to influence objective conditions. Subjects used secondary control coping in an attempt to reduce emotional distress, to maximize one's "goodness of fit." In relinquished control coping the subjects neither tried to change a situation nor attempted to adjust to it. Carver et al. (1989) used an inventory to assess ways in which people responded to stress. They categorized responses as "problem focused," "emotion focused," and "less useful" coping responses. Their categories of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping were very similar to Band and Weisz' (1988) primary and secondary control categories, although more elaborated. Their third category, "less useful" coping, included such responses as venting of emotions, behavioral or mental disengagement (p. 267).

While the methods that have been used to examine emotional coping and emotional self-regulation are limited, they are of value. The four categories established by Franko et al. (1985) could be used to

study emotional regulation. The contributions of Band and Weisz (1988) and Carver et al. (1989) could be modified, consolidated, and enlarged into the four following categories: coping directed primarily toward the external world, coping directed primarily toward the internal world, other coping--which would include "relinquished coping" and "less useful" coping categories, combinations--of the first three categories.

Relationship Between Perceptions of Significant Others and Self-Regard/Self-Esteem

The study of the self's perception of significant others is important because of its relationship to self-regard/self-esteem. Beginning with the work of Cooley (1912), an extensive group of psychological researchers and clinicians have established and confirmed that relationship. "We are more or less unconsciously seeing ourselves as we think others see us" (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 96). Also see Harter (1983), Shraugher and Schoeneman (1979), Wylie (1979), Gordon and Gergen (1968), Greenberg et al. (1983), Demo et al. (1987), Gecas and Schwalbe (1986), Openshaw et al. (1984), Felson and Zielinski (1989). That position is represented in the theories and conceptualizations of H. Kohut (1971, 1977) and is identified in academic psychology as the "symbolic-interactionist" position. "An individual's perception or interpretation of others' behavior is more important to that individual and his self-esteem than is the others' actual behavior" (Demo et al., 1987, p. 707). Juhasz (1989), from her studies, concluded that significant others are the most important factor in the development of self-esteem (p. 584). Gecas and Schwalbe (1986) reaffirmed that, "Adolescents' self-evaluations were much more strongly related to their

perceptions of parental behavior than of parents' self-reported behavior." They found little correspondence between parents reports of their behavior and the adolescents' descriptions of this behavior. "Perceptions of parental behavior were somewhat more consequential for adolescents' self-esteem than were perceptions of maternal behavior" (p. 37).

The findings of Felson (1989) added some qualifications to previous studies. He reported that children have a general sense of how others view them, but usually cannot judge how they are viewed differentially by specific others. He found that the reflected appraisals (i.e., a person's perception of the appraisals of significant others) were not very accurate. He concluded, "Children have only vague conceptions of how they are viewed by others, which are not very accurate. Whatever the source of these reflected appraisals, however, they do appear to affect self-appraisals" (p. 971). Harter (1983) supported this finding in reporting that adolescents tend to construct an over-generalized other (p. 315).

So, for the psychologists interested in better understanding and fostering self-esteem in adolescents, it is necessary to carefully examine the adolescents' perceptions of significant others. The research, compiled over many years, has firmly established a link between such self-perceptions of others and levels of self-regard/self-esteem.

Early Adolescent Perceptions of Self and Others

The findings from various studies, conducted over the years, are consistent on this issue. See, for example, the works of Livesley and

Bromley (1973), Montemayor and Eisen (1977), Bandura (1977), Burns (1979), Rosenberg (1979), Selman (1980), Petersen (1981), L'Ecuyer (1981), and Harter (1983). In his comprehensive work, Burns (1979) reported on the contrast between the self and other-perceptions of younger children as compared to the perceptions of early adolescents. The younger children "stress mainly external criteria while the older children were more likely to describe self or others in terms of inner resources and quality of relationship (p. 166). A summary statement by Harter (1983), condensed the findings in regard to developmental changes in self-other perception:

> There is general support for a gradual progression from self-descriptions based on concrete, observable characteristics . . . to trait-like constructs . . . to more abstract self-definitions based on psychological processes. (p. 299)

Selman (1980) used a statement by Tagiuri to summarize his own work.

> The observations or inferences we make are principally about intentions, attitudes, emotions, ideas, abilities, purposes, traits, thoughts, perceptions, memories--events that are <u>inside</u> the person and strictly psychological . . . [and] qualities of relationships <u>between</u> persons such as friendship, love, power and influence. We attribute to a person properties . . . which in turn mediate his actions. (p. 232)

From their work, Livesley and Bromley (1973) contributed the following refinements: the evaluations made by older subjects tended to refer to the stimulus person's impact on other people, such as, "good personality, pleasant." While children of higher intelligence tended to use more statements and show better organization, intelligence did not affect the number or proportion of traits used. Children found it easier to describe other children than to describe adults. Liking or

disliking the stimulus person did not affect the number of central statements or trait names (pp. 180-91).

Damon and Hart (1988) recognized the "developmental links between self-understanding and (other) person-perception," but urged reserve in assuming that person and self-perceptions go hand in hand.

> Self-understanding and other-understanding . . . share the common function of identifying individuals, and thus have a common bond. . . . One knows the self in many intimate ways unimaginable in person-perception generally. . . . These two social-cognitive concepts, therefore, stand in a uniquely close yet fundamentally separate relation to one another. (p. 176)

They believed that "children think of the self in more psychological terms than when thinking about other, a tendency that becomes even more pronounced in adolescents" (p. 185).

So the research findings are in accord. The early adolescent's reported perceptions of self and others will be more abstract, will make more references to qualities of relationship between persons, and be more descriptive of psychological states and processes than would be the reported perceptions of younger children.

Early Adolescents' Significant Others

The findings of Burns (1979), Rosenberg (1979), Blyth et al. (1982), Greenberg et al. (1983), Harter (1983), Reid et al. (1989), and Felson and Zielinski (1989) are in accord with Rosenberg's summary statement. "Whatever the child's sex, race, age or socioeconomic status, the mother is most likely to be ranked as highly significant, followed by father, brothers and sisters. . . ." (p. 96). In his review, Galbo (1983), however, reported that the same-sex parent was most likely to be selected as significant other. Blyth et al. (1982)

also found that "parents and siblings were almost always listed as significant others by adolescents" (grades 7-10). Over three-quarters of the respondents listed at least one extended family member. The authors noted the absence of opposite-sex, non-related young people as peer significant others (pp. 444-46).

Variations in findings did occur in relationship to several other variables. In terms of the differing influence of mothers versus fathers, Reid et al. (1989) found that mothers are perceived as being "the best multi-purpose social providers" (e.g., reliable, self-enhancing, affectionate). Friends are perceived as the best source of companionship support. Teachers, like fathers, are regarded as excellent sources for informational support (e.g., advice). Mothers were rated as more satisfactory sources of instrumental (material) help than were fathers (p. 907). Burns (1979) reported that mothers were generally perceived as less threatening and more friendly than fathers (p. 163). Felson and Zielinski (1989), studying a younger group (grades 5 through 8), recognized the powerful but equal influence of both parents. Parental support affected girls more than boys. Self-esteem affected parental support, that is, there was a bi-directional influence (p. 734).

Another difference, the relative influence of parents versus peers during adolescence, has been debated in the literature. The recent findings of Greenberg et al. (1983), Reid et al. (1989), and Blyth et al. (1982) recast the question and the resulting answer. "Adolescents' relationships to both parents and peers were related to perceived self-esteem and life satisfaction," according to Greenberg (p.

382). But the perceived quality of the adolescents' affective attachment to their parents was significantly more powerful than that to peers in predicting well-being (p. 373). Greenberg and his group observed that parents were often consulted over peers when important decisions were involved; adolescents were more likely to seek advice from peers if parents were regarded as rejecting or indifferent (p. 375). Some of the more recent studies (e.g., Reid et al., 1989; Blyth et al. 1982) concluded, that while generally the early adolescent increases his involvement with peers and they take on an increased importance in his life, this is not at the expense of the importance of parental persons as significant others. "Intimacy with parents was relatively consistent across ages whereas intimacy with friends increased with age" (Reid et al., 1989, p. 907).

According to the findings of Emmerich (1978) and Reid et al. (1989), situational determinants influence, in part, whether peers or parents are consulted about certain matters and their relative influence on the situation and the self. Reid and her group also observed a small proportion of children who did not have friends or siblings in whom they could confide. Two other variables, age and gender, have also been identified by Juhasz (1985) and Emmerich (1978) as related to the selection of the significant other and the relative influence of the other on parts of the self of the subjects.

In summary, the research demonstrates that when the adolescent is asked to select his most significant others, he will choose mother, father, family--nuclear and extended. By adolescence, peers have clearly taken on increased importance as significant others but along

with, rather than in place of parents. However, how these significant others are perceived and used by the adolescent will be influenced by such variables as the perceived relationship, the needs, the age, the gender, and the issues of the moment.

Characteristics of Significance and Significant Others

The self, in its innate quest to develop, sustain, and enhance self-regard/self-esteem, seeks out, relates with, and attaches itself to "significant others," or what Kohut called "self-objects."

Certain principles must be taken into account in order to understand the significance of these important others to the self or the subject. "Significance is in the eye of the beholder. Not all significant others are equally significant" (Rosenberg, 1979, pp. 83-84). Different people may be significant in different respects and for different reasons. In communication with the significant others, both what is said, and by whom it is said are important. The influence on the self of the feedback of another will be determined by whether the other's opinion is valued and/or respected (Rosenberg, 1979, pp. 83-94).

People also have some control over who they turn to for affirmation--the principle of "selective valuation." Generally, with development, the self has more conscious control over this process. The adolescent has more control over whom he selects and turns to for feedback and affirmation about certain parts of his self than does his younger counterpart. This selective valuation operates to protect self-esteem and maintain self-consistency (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 264). But

this "selectivity mechanism" is also limited by reality. For example, the perceptions of the mother's opinions about the self are difficult to overcome by this process. The adolescent is also restricted by the particular familial-social (e.g., school) network in which he resides. His sources of significant others are circumscribed by reality and restricted to the persons who are part of this network.

Some psychologists have emphasized the reciprocal, interactive effect between the adolescent's self-esteem and parental support and reaction (see Felson & Zielinski, 1989). Rollins and Thomas (1979) criticized the unidirectional model of parental causation. Demo et al. (1987) added an additional dimension in reporting that the parent-adolescent relationship shapes the self-concept of all family members (p. 713).

General and specific qualities of the significant others have been studied extensively and with a variety of approaches. The reported findings had to do with the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the significant others that were self-esteem enhancing to the adolescent. Few findings, however, reported on those qualities that were experienced by the self of the adolescent as disturbing and/or hurtful. Rollins and Thomas (1979) provided a comprehensive review of that research covering the period from 1960 to 1974. The major conclusions from these earlier studies were that parental support and parent involvement, along with parental willingness to grant autonomy and freedom, were related to high self-esteem in children (Demo et al., 1987, p. 706). Openshaw et al. (1984), in a later study, again found that parental support was most strongly and consistently related to

self-esteem worth in both sexes. They also studied "induction"--an approach to discipline that uses information-sharing and consequences. They reported that induction versus coercion was second only to support in being consistently related to self-esteem worth. "Adolescents who perceive their parents' behavior as coercive reported having feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and lack of confidence" (pp. 269-70). Demo et al. (1987) reviewed studies that were published from 1974 to 1987. They found "an emerging consensus that parental support and participation have a positive effect on adolescent's self-esteem." The data concerning parental control was more inconsistent and they offered various explanations for this. Communication was also strongly tied to adolescent's self-esteem. They speculated that communication was perceived as an indicator of support; that support was a multi-dimensional construct (pp. 706-13). Bednar et al. (1989) established three dimensions of parenting that they found were related to self-esteem--"acceptance, expectations, and autonomy." They reported that parents of high self-esteem children are seen as "being relatively higher on each parenting dimension than are parents of low-self-esteem children" (p. 276). they found that everyone "receives regular amounts of negative feedback from the social environment, most of which is probably valid," and that "most people receive . . . substantial amounts of authentic, favorable social feedback but tend not to believe it" (pp. 12-13). Gecas and Schwalbe (1986) summarized the findings of previous studies that had related adolescents' self-esteem to parental support, parental acceptance, parental interest, "good" family relations (i.e.,

affection,shared activity, inclusion), "appropriate" limit setting, and mutual respect (p. 38).

Most of the findings of Burns (1979) are incorporated in the previous summations. He found that high levels of self-regard/self-esteem are the characteristics of children who perceive their parents as "tolerant, fair, kind, and good." Children were likely to develop diminished self-regard/self-esteem as a result of interaction with parents who were vacillating, cold, and unaffectionate. Children perceived the significant others as persons who were able to promote or diminish security, helplessness, and self-worth (p. 161). Burns identified three conditions that were strongly conducive to the development of high self-esteem: acceptance, high standards with enforcement, and respect for individual initiative. "Expecting little . . . prevents a healthy self-concept [from] emerging . . . a healthy self-image is a result of a balance between affection and control" (p. 211). Burns found that boys learned to be masculine "through identifying with a warm, firm, but accepting father whom he values and feels close to" (p. 200). Felson and Zielinski (1989) found that children with high self-esteem tended to perceive their parents as providing more praise, affection, communication, and approval and being less critical than children with lower self-esteem (p. 734). Galbo (1983) identified three valued qualities of significant others. They were people who could be modeled after and admired, who reciprocated in terms of interest and liking, and who possessed "human qualities" (pp. 417-27).

Other researchers, from a clinical orientation (King, 1979;

Offer et al., 1981, 1988) provided findings on the quality of the adolescent's relationship with significant others, essentially parents and peers. The adolescents reported having good relationships with their parents, feeling close to them and respected by them. They did not perceive any major problems in this relationship and showed no evidence of harboring bad feelings toward their parents. They believed that their parents were generally satisfied with them, proud of them, and respectful of their autonomy. They generally saw their parents as patient, optimistic, and reliable, and believed that they understood their parents (Offer et al., 1981, pp. 66-67).

In his study, Ra (1983) looked at the "interpersonal perceptions" of adolescents. His study group included high school students and reformatory residents. The themes most frequently elicited by subjects had to do with relationships with family and friends. Themes having to do with competition, achievement, and accomplishment, particularly as related to sports, were also prevalent. His study revealed that the adolescents manifested "high tension" in regard to violence and drugs. He found virtually no difference between high school students and the reformatory residents as far as elicited themes were concerned. There was a pronounced difference between the two groups, however, in terms of the tone of their narratives and the endings of their stories. The pervasive mood of the reformatory subjects was one of wild and hurt feelings, pessimism, and unhappy outcomes. The writings of the high school subjects most frequently conveyed a positive atmosphere and happy endings (pp. 868-72).

Some impressions and themes emerged from a review of this topic.

In order to understand the selection and meaning of the significant others to the self of the subject, one must take into account some basic principles, such as those outlined by Rosenberg (1979), that operate in regard to aspects of significance. The findings that are reported tend to identify positive characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of significant others that enhance self-regard/self-esteem. This knowledge is valuable in defining the interpersonal, affective qualities and components of these important relationships. These findings, however, are usually reported in abstract terms which makes them difficult to operationalize. One cannot be sure what it is, specifically, for example, about "support" or "involvement" that the adolescent experiences as either meaningful or immaterial.

Upon reviewing this literature, there is a sense of a basic concordance in the diverse findings, although they are difficult to consolidate. One comprehensive way to do that is to use the broad categories of--support, involvement/participation, and autonomy/ freedom. Most descriptors can be placed under one of these three categories; some, like "communication," might be placed in more than one category. The literature is much more limited in identifying variables that contribute to diminished self-regard/self-esteem, although it does provide some answers. Parents who are perceived by the adolescent as coercive, vacillating, unaffectionate, or as unsupportive, or uninvolved will contribute to poor self-regard.

While some valuable knowledge has been developed in regard to this topic, Juhasz's (1989) recent observation seems valid and supported. Questions still remain about the most fruitful approaches.

"We still have much to learn about what . . . 'significance grantee' does, says, and feels; [about] the resulting emotions and cognitions" (p. 584).

Theoretical Positions in Regard to Emotions and Emotional Self-Regulation

Most of the current group of psychologists who have studied emotions and emotional-regulation emphasized the dual but interrelated functions of internal and interpersonal self-regulation. Bretherton et al. (1986) representing the "functionalist" approach, recognized the "organizing and adaptive role of emotions in intrapsychic regulation and interpersonal interaction" (p. 529). Campos, Campos, and Barrett (1989) adopted the "relational" view which regarded emotions as "processes of establishing, maintaining, or disrupting the relation between the organism and environment on matters of significance to the person" (p. 394). They believed that the emotional meaning of an experience will be dependent upon the person's perception of the experience and the meaning the person ascribed to that interaction. Leventhal and Tomarken (1986) addressed the reciprocal, interactive nature of these components:

> Social interaction stimulates emotion and defines higher level cognitive attributes of the self-schema. These attributes create the context that gives meaning to new social situations and within which new emotional episodes are constructed and experienced. Elicitors of emotion are likely to be prior social events and social stimuli. (pp. 599-601)

A number of researchers emphasized the important contribution of emotional control and emotional regulation to the social and psychological well-being of the self. Harter's (1983) review concluded that children's sense of emotional self-control was crucial to their sense of self (p. 364). Kopp (1989) identified emotional control as a

pivotal process in coping effectively with the environment (p. 343). Bednar et al. (1989) identified coping as an essential contributor to self-regard/self-esteem (p. 35). Emotional self-regulation, according to Emde (1983), allows the person to participate in social life and, by such regulation, to attempt to interact in the most need-satisfying ways. Kohut (1971) and Kohut and Wolf (1978), emphasized the crucial functions of the significant others ("self-objects") and of the emotional regulation of the self. "Psychological survival requires . . . the presence of responsive-empathic self-objects" (p. 416). Self-regulatory capacities "protect the normal individual from being traumatized by the spreading of his emotions" (p. 420). (See also, Band & Weisz, 1988; Bandura, 1977; Barrett & Campos, 1987; Dodge, 1989; Franko et al., 1985; Lane & Schwartz, 1987; and Rosenberg, 1979.)

Emde (1983) postulated two purposes of the affective self. It gives continuity to experience across development and it enables the person to understand other human beings. Emde defined four functions of affective life: self-regulation--of emotional life, as part of survival and growth; social fittedness--the self's attempt to establish and maintain the most satisfactory human interaction; affective monitoring--the self's efforts at self-regulation, particularly in the service of maximizing pleasure and minimizing unpleasure; social referencing--using significant others to make emotional sense out of internal and external events (p. 183). Hesse and Cicchetti (1982) postulated two types of rules that influence emotional expression and experience: social display rules--rules of a social group, and personal display rules--individual-specific rules. Both sets of rules determine how,

when, and where the individual expresses or controls his emotions (p. 34).

In working toward a "cognitive, social-learning reconceptualization of personality," Mischel (1973) identified five variables that reflected individual differences. Those differences referred to varying ability of persons to construct preferred responses, differences in categorization, expectancies, and values, and differences in self-regulatory systems (p. 275).

Lane and Schwartz (1987) offered their conceptualization of the components of emotions, one that they believe most theorists could accept: the physiological or biological, the experiential or psychological, and the expressive or social. Leventhal and Tomarken (1986) used a similar categorization and suggested areas in need of study. These areas included the study of emotions and emotional development and the study of emotion from various perspectives. They believed that such study, the study "of the intimate association of emotion and cognition over the lifespan [could result in] rich rewards" (pp. 598-601).

While there still remains the question of the relationship between cognition and affect, Case, Hayward, Lewis, and Hurst (1988) recognized the mutuality, reciprocalness, and interactive nature of both cognition and affect. These theorists believed that cognition and emotion are generated by different systems, but contribute to the whole human being. Internal control structures can either distort the person's perceptions of situations or allow the person to experience situations pretty much "as is." Compas (1987) maintained that it is

important to consider both the personal and environmental factors when studying adolescent coping. More specifically he advocated considering the adolescent's social context, psychological and biological preparedness (e.g., temperament, sensitivity, responsiveness) and level of cognitive and social development (p. 394).

Kohut and Wolf (1978) presented a theory of the self, derived from clinical experience, that was different from most of the previous research and theory cited. This theory incorporated both the role of significant others and the role of self-regulation of affective life as two of several vital components of self-development and self-functioning. These theorists maintained that the important functions of the self-objects (significant others) are to be available to, and to appropriately affirm, admire, and serve as a source of idealization for the adolescent self with its stage-specific needs. When these conditions are not satisfied, the self develops feeling states of vulnerability, insufficiency, inadequacy, and/or hurt that the self must then somehow integrate and handle. The degree of self-immaturity will depend on the "extent, severity, nature, and distribution of the disturbance" (p. 415). In their view, significant others, self-regulation, self-regard/self-esteem are all part of a dynamic, reciprocal, interactive developmental process, extending throughout the life of the individual. A strong self allows the individual to tolerate even wide swings of self-esteem in response to the vicissitudes of life. Kohut and Wolf (1978) maintained that

> Psychological survival requires a specific psychological environment --the presence of responsive, empathic self objects. The self arises . . . as a result of the interplay between . . . [one's] innate equipment and the selective responses of the self-objects in

> which certain potentialities are encouraged in their development while others remain unencouraged or even actively discouraged. (pp. 416-17)

According to Kohut and Wolf (1987), the character of the child's self will be much more influenced by what the parents are, than what the parents do. The essence of a healthy relationship between parent and child is a parent whose self is in tune with the changing needs of the child rather than caught up in his/her own needs. The self is at risk to the extent that significant others are unable to be supportive and/or are threatening to the self of the child. Self disruptions are "ubiquitous"; they occur in all human beings when their self-esteem has been taxed and no nurturance has been available to counter that state. The significant others (e.g., parents) contribute to self-regulation by such means as "shared emotionality," by providing self-soothing, by protecting the child from being overwhelmed by his emotions, and by serving as a model of self-regulation. These theories invite the study of the stage-specific ways in which significant others and self-regulation interact, and the specific contents and emphasis that are part of that developmental phase, that is, early adolescence.

Developmental Factors in Emotional Development and Emotional Self-Regulation

Authors seemed to concur on at least three basic ideas related to the developmental processes associated with emotional regulation. (See Berg, 1989; Carroll & Steward, 1984; Carver et al., 1989; Dodge, 1989; Kopp, 1989; Lane & Schwartz, 1987; and Rosenberg, 1979.) First, as previously discussed, children become more introspective as they enter adolescence. As Rosenberg (1979) observed, "The older child

becomes more aware of an inner life of wish, desire, and impulse, and of themselves as agents struggling to control and restrain it" (p. 214). He found that self-control was experienced as a greater problem by older children; when the self was overcome by such impulses, self-worth was diminished. Yet, as Rosenberg noted, having control over one's impulses did not have the same self-enhancing affect. This phenomenon parallels the standards of society which doles out punishments for infractions but does not similarly bestow awards for positive behaviors. As Carroll and Steward (1984) also found, older children are "more likely to describe feelings as internal," to be more empathic, to be more able to understand multiple feelings and to recognize that they could change or hide their feelings (p. 1486).

Second, emotions and emotional self-regulation has a developmental dimension, that is, these aspects of the self undergo transformations as the child matures. It "mirrors" all other kinds of developmental changes, according to Kopp (1989, p. 351). Dodge (1989) found that as children get older "more sophisticated regulatory behaviors develop, including improved judgment concerning when to deploy specific regulatory behaviors and improved ability to anticipate outcomes of this behavior (p. 341). With time, people tend to adopt certain coping tactics as relatively stable preferences, according to Carver et al. (1989, p. 280). Like any other developmental changes, emotional self-regulation does not, as Kopp (1989) noted, move forward with unceasing progressions. Certain life experiences are required in order to learn to "modulate, tolerate and endure affective experiences" (p. 343). Developmental patterns and levels of skills attained in terms

of emotional self-regulation, vary from person to person. The studies by Campos et al. (1989) demonstrated how children, at various ages and stages, derived meaning from their significant others and its concomitant influence on their emotions. They observed how distressing it became to the child when a significant other(s) was, for whatever reasons and in whatever ways, emotionally "insufficient" (p. 397).

Third, most theorists agree that the development of cognition is interrelated with emotional development, although there has been some debate about the relationship of these factors which Carroll and Steward (1984) summarized as follows: "Cognitive structures provide necessary but not sufficient conditions for emotional development" (p. 1491). In her study Berg (1989) found that young adolescents' ability to solve everyday problems was unrelated to their measures of intelligence (p. 616). Carroll and Steward (1984) studied pre-adolescent children and found a correlation between levels of performance on affective and cognitive tasks, and that bright children were more self-aware about feelings (p. 1486).

In summary, the current consensus seems to be that emotional self-regulation follows a developmental course similar to other areas of the self that have been studied more extensively. While it is generally agreed and accepted that the development of cognition is an important variable in this unfolding, there is some difference of opinion as to the impact of its influence. As is true for other areas of self-development, in the area of self-regulation it is recognized that significant others, as well as one's own perception of one's efforts at self-regulation, are important variables contributing to the process.

Like other areas of development, the process of the development of emotional self-regulation is "uneven," displays individual differences, variations, and skill levels, and can be arrested at any stage of development.

Adolescent Emotional Control and Emotional Self-Regulation

The studies in this area, particularly those that relate to children and adolescents, are not abundant and are relatively recent. The work that has been done on the topic revealed a variety of approaches but concordance on the basic findings that have been generated. Harter (1983), in reviewing the work, provided a synthesis on the subject of "self-control" and noted that the capacity for self-control should be viewed as a vital dimension of good self-regard (pp. 324-39, 364).

Self-control issues that adolescents consider problematic, according to Rosenberg (1979), are getting mad, inability to discipline one's self to do the expected, fighting with parents, being too outspoken, being too obvious in displaying hurt, getting upset too easily, and having a short temper (p. 213).

After reviewing a number of studies on adolescents, including his own, King (1973) presented his summation. He found that most adolescents displayed effective means of handling emotion, and he identified the following ways that they tried to cope with feelings: by dealing directly and sharing feelings; by turning away from painful feelings to topics and activities, often of a physical nature; by sublimating sexual and aggressive energy in social activities and

sports; by using humor--to blunt anxiety, limit guilt, offer perspective; by using role reversal and cognitive planning, especially for new situations. The normal adolescents showed evidence of being able to integrate new experiences with past ones where they had found satisfaction and success. They had some conflict around sexual drives in the early years of adolescence, but manifested more ease in handling such impulses by later adolescence. These boys did not feel they could talk openly with adults about these issues. King found that adolescents, at times, had doubts about themselves, had anxieties, got depressed, etc. but he underscored their effective means for coping with such emotional states. They tended to search for self-understanding, could be appropriately self-critical but did not get bogged down in guilt or undue loss of self-esteem. The normal adolescents' effective use of humor, along with having more interests and more interactions distinguished them from their more troubled peers.

Franko et al. (1985) studied children's "Strategies for Self-Regulation" and used the categories of "coping" versus "avoidance" for categorizing responses. The self-regulatory strategies of these children, ages 6 to 11, were predominantly behavioral, non-verbal and self-oriented. They found that when dealing with anger, boys showed more coping responses than avoidance responses. Boys used almost twice as many avoidance responses as coping responses when dealing with sadness. The type of strategy used was situationally influenced. When dealing with peers, their most frequent coping response was "negotiation" and with adults it tended to be "acquiescence" (pp. 214, 216-17). Carver et al. (1989) found that the distinction between

problem focused and emotion focused coping was too simplistic. Most stress elicited both types of coping (p. 267).

Compas (1987) studied adolescent emotional regulation in terms of problem-focused versus emotion-focused coping. He concluded that both were important for successful adaptation. The effectiveness of either approach depended on the type of stressors. Effective coping was likely to be characterized by flexibility and change. To cope more effectively, children used such approaches as selective attending, self-distracting, or cognitive transforming of events. Children who showed more dysfunctional coping tended to overly rely on such strategies as daydreaming, fantasizing, and avoidance or escape (pp. 399-400).

Stark et al. (1989) examined "Common Problems and Coping Strategies" of normal adolescents, ages 14 to 17. The most commonly reported problems among boys were school, parents, friends, and girl friends. Coping strategies did not differ by age but did differ by sex. Males, for example, reported using wishful thinking more often. Again the "situational influence" was observed; coping strategies differed according to the problem being responded to. The adolescents used more varied strategies in attempting to deal with peer relationships than they did in dealing with problems of school or parents. Males, unlike the females, less often used social support and emotional regulation in attempting to cope. Some of these findings were similar to findings that were reported in other studies in which the adolescent was asked to identify personal problems. They cited--fear of negative evaluation, fights with and/or rejection by a friend or someone of the opposite sex, conflicts with adults, and concerns about the future (p. 204).

Band and Weisz (1988) studied children ages 6 to 9, and looked at coping from both an internal and external perspective. They used the categories of primary coping, directed at influencing the external world, and secondary coping, aimed at modifying the internal world, or relinquished control, that is, neither trying to change or adjust. They found that even young children could identify stressful situations and coping efforts, and evaluate the affectiveness of such efforts. Children showed a strong inclination to cope rather than relinquish control (3.5%) and thus fail to cope. Styles differed as a function of the situation and in terms of the age of the child. The use of primary coping was applied to loss/separation, peer difficulties and especially school failure. Secondary control coping was frequently utilized with stressful medical situations (e.g., thinking happy thoughts) and tended to increase with age. Not all specific primary control responses declined with age. For example, problem-focused aggression was actually reported more frequently in some situations with increasing age (pp. 251-52).

In summary, the research related to emotional control and emotional self-regulation of adolescents showed that self-control is a vital component of good self-regard. Adolescents cited the following as problematic issues for them: handling anger, lack of self-discipline, conflicts with peers and parents, impulsiveness, emotional vulnerability, fear of negative appraisal, and worries about the future. This research showed that most adolescents were able to cope effectively with their emotions and were able to learn from their experiences. Some of the ways that they attempted to cope were by being direct and sharing

of feelings, by diverting or avoiding, by using humor or activities to sublimate, or by employing cognitive strategies. The normal adolescent differed from his more troubled peer in that he used humor more effectively, had more interests, and interacted more with others. The following approaches were used in the study of adolescent self-regulation of emotions: coping versus avoiding, problem-focused versus emotion-focused, and primary (external) coping versus secondary (internal) coping. These different approaches yielded similar findings. Coping responses are much more prevalent than avoidance responses and more conducive to psychological health and growth. Effective coping strategies are characterized by variability, flexibility, and adaptability. The specific coping response is also influenced by the subject's affects, gender, level of development, and by the situation and the others involved.

Summary

A group of respected researchers established the need for a diversity of methodological approaches when studying self-phenomena, and the idea that knowledge derived from such varied approaches enhances reliability and validity of findings. There also was concordance among researchers on several points. In order to understand personal meanings, the information must be derived from the subjects themselves, and adolescents are capable of supplying such information. Any approach has its strengths and weaknesses, but having a trained, experienced interviewer to conduct the study is one important way to minimize research bias. The challenge of such research approaches is in

establishing the best ways to analyze the data and conceptualize meaning from it.

Research efforts over the years established and confirmed the link between self-perceptions of others and levels of self-regard/self-esteem; that the early adolescents' reported perceptions of self and other will be more descriptive of personality traits and qualities of relationships than will be the reported perceptions of younger children. The research also demonstrated that when the adolescent is asked to select his adult significant others, he will choose members of his family--nuclear and extended. Studies of peer significant others are not as abundant or consistent in their findings, but they reveal that early adolescent males are likely to select same-sex, non-related age mates as their significant others. Most researchers concur, that with adolescence, peers will have taken on increased importance as significant others, but along with, rather than in place of the important influence of the parents.

The extensive and diverse collection of research findings in regard to attributes of significance, can be consolidated as follows: Significant others are important to, and valued by the self for--the support, involvement/participation, autonomy/freedom--that they provide. These research findings, for the most part, identified positive characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of significant others that enhanced self-regard/self-esteem, and were sparse in identifying variables that contributed to diminished self-regard/self-esteem.

Studies that have been conducted in regard to self-regulation of emotions can be condensed into approaches that looked at problem-

focused, emotion-focused, and "other" strategies of emotional self-regulation. Studies related to various aspects of self-regulation of emotions reported that the perceived ability to regulate emotional experiences is a vital contributor to good self-regard/self-esteem and harmonious interpersonal relationships. Emotional self-regulation follows a developmental course similar to other areas of self-development and displays individual differences and variations similar to other processes of self-development. Studies have shown that while normal adolescents regularly experience unpleasant emotional states, they are able to deal with such experiences and have effective means of coping with their emotional lives. Effective self-regulation is characterized by the use of varied coping strategies and by coping responses directed toward dealing with both internal and interpersonal factors.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the basic framework of the study, the role of the interviewer, the interview format, "On Significant Others" designed for this study, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale used as a supplement to the study. The chapter also describes the Data Collection Section used to record responses and observations of subjects, the selection and characteristics of subjects, the procedure followed in conducting the study, and the methods of recording, ordering, and analyzing the data.

Framework of the Study

The definition of a "naturalist inquiry," as stated by Patton (1980), is applicable in defining this investigation: "A discovery oriented approach which minimizes investigator manipulation of the study setting and places no prior constraints on what the outcomes of the research will be" (p. 42). Kerlinger's (1973) definition of the purposes of an exploratory study are applicable here. This exploratory study sought to discover significant variables in the situation and the relationship among those variables, and to develop information "for later more systematic and rigorous testing of hypothesis. . . . It seeks what is rather than predicts relations to be found" (p. 406). The approach of this study reflected the thinking of G. Allport, made many

years ago: "I see no reason why we should not start our investigation by asking him . . . to tell us the answers as he sees them" (Monte, 1980, p. 513). The intent of this study was to build on the established knowledge base presented in Chapter II in examining how early adolescents perceived significant others, the characteristics which contributed to significance and the affects aroused and subjects' attempts to regulate them. The methods for eliciting the above information from subjects were also based on research and theory reported in the literature.

The approach was designed to provide subjects with maximum opportunity to derive their responses from their own introspections and in their own unique ways. The interview format, "On Significant Others," a structured approach within broad parameters, ensured that the basic issues of the investigation were addressed and that consistency and replication were possible from subject to subject. The decision to see the subjects over a series of interviews was made for several reasons. The approach was compatible with the goal of trying to derive more specific, in-depth information. As Offer et al. (1980) had found, "The more psychological the information sought, the more the investigator must depend on a certain alliance that makes his investigation tolerable" (p. 704). This approach made it possible for both subjects and interviewer to feel less hurried and to develop the relationship in harmony with their own process. The series of meetings gave the interviewer an opportunity to observe the interactive process of the subjects, to go back over replies that were incomplete and/or unclear, and to probe responses to replies, not possible in a one-

session encounter. It provided an opportunity for the interviewer to better judge the genuineness and consistencies of replies. The series of meetings minimized some of the problems of validity and reliability associated with "one-shot" efforts as discussed by Burns (1979, p. 93) and Miles and Huberman (1986, p. 236). The study was conducted by a trained and experienced clinician as a way of maximizing the goals, method, and approach of the study while minimizing bias in line with the thinking of Miles and Huberman (1986, pp. 46-48). The approach to data collection incorporated ideas found to enhance the quality of such data. The data was collected by a trusted researcher in an official setting; it was observed and collected first-hand, in a one-on-one situation with the respondent, and over a series of contacts (Miles & Huberman, 1986, p. 236).

Role of the Interviewer

One important element of this methodology was the use of an experienced child psychotherapist who conducted all of the interviews. This trained clinician had over twenty-five years experience in interviewing and working with early adolescent males. Integral to the interview methodology was the developed ability of the interviewer to establish a safe, comfortable, confidential place in which to meet, to establish initial trust and a working alliance in the relationship with the subjects, and to be aware of his part in the process and manage it in such a way as to promote spontaneous self-disclosure. The interviewer exercised clinical judgment in deciding when and how to encourage elaboration, and accurately recorded the subjects' replies. The findings of Burns (1979), from his review of methodological problems

associated with self-concept assessment, provided defini

for this position.

> The optimum approach . . . is to aim for objectivity allow[ing] sensitivity, experience, and empathy to pl[illegible] in forming more subjective inference . . . inference has been demonstrated to be a valuable scientific tool with high inter-observer reliability. (pp. 91-92)

The characteristics of the experienced interviewer in this study have been found to enhance the validity and reliability of the person as an information-gathering instrument. He had familiarity with the phenomenon and setting understudy, strong conceptual interests, a multi-disciplinary approach, and good investigative skills. "You have to be knowledgeable to collect good information." Such a researcher brings to the task a more refined, bias-resistant, efficient approach, is "quicker to home in on core processes and more ecumenical in the search for conceptual meaning" (Miles & Huberman, 1986, pp. 46-48). Effective ways of eliciting and developing personal meaning from the subjects' responses and the researcher's clinical training and experience, then, were crucial components of the interview methodology.

Interview Format "On Significant Others"

Another important element in the methodology was the interview format, "On Significant Others" (see Appendix A). It contained thirty-six carefully crafted, open-ended questions designed to elicit the information germane to the purposes of the study. The format was piloted on over forty early adolescent subjects and underwent several modifications before being finalized. The construction of this format was influenced by three factors: the goals of the study, relevant theory and research, and professional knowledge and experience in regard

to the most effective approaches to eliciting personal information. Because this approach was different from most of the previous research approaches (i.e., use of a trained interviewer and interview format), there were few available studies from which to derive ideas about how to develop and construct the format. The information presented by Juhasz (1989, pp. 583-84), the principals on how to enhance reliability presented by Kerlinger (1973, p. 454) and Burns (1979, p. 74), and the professional experiences of the interviewer and other professionals consulted, contributed to the construction of the questions that composed the format, "On Significant Others." The group of trained and experienced professionals who assisted in reviewing and revising the questions included a research psychologist, an educational psychologist, a child psychiatrist, and a child psychotherapist, all with extensive experience in interviewing early adolescent males.

The construction of the questions was influenced and guided by several general considerations. First, the questions were selected and structured to facilitate one of the objectives of the study, which was to develop specific insights. Second, the questions were structured to elicit the self-perceptions of the subjects and to stimulate the full range of self-reactions. The inquiry, for example, was structured to evoke both positive and negative perceptions, to stimulate both the cognitive and affective realms of self-experience, and to elicit the attributes and behaviors of significant others that were both self-enhancing and self-diminishing. Third, the derived data needed to be "useable," that is, it needed to be in a form that made it easy to compare and contrast with other research. Fourth, similar issues were

approached in different ways in order to enhance reliability. "If you can reproduce the finding in a new context or in another part of the data base, it is a dependable one. If provisions aren't made in advance for replication later in the study, they won't happen" (Miles & Huberman, 1986, pp. 239-40).

The interview process began with the interviewer presenting the following instructions to subjects:

> I want to talk with you about people who are important to you. By "important" I mean--people who can, or who do--affect the way that you <u>see</u> yourself, affect the way that you <u>feel</u> about yourself. Remember, they can affect you either way--at times they can help you feel better about yourself; at times they can contribute to your feeling worse about yourself.

It is a well-established principal of clinical work and vital to basic understanding between subjects and interviewer, that the purpose of such an undertaking be defined and established at the beginning (see Biestek, 1957, p. 39; Kramer, 1980, p. 187). As reported by Burns (1979), "Adequate, prechosen and stated definitions of terms has been found to be helpful in controlling individual interpretation" (p. 76). The way in which this definition was structured was consistent with the previous discussions and was intended to operationalize the definition of "significant others" formulated by researchers such as Rosenberg (1979, p. 87) and Juhasz (1989). She defined significant others as "those who are important to us, whose opinions we desire, value, and respect, and who influence the way that we feel about ourselves" (pp. 581-83).

The following considerations influenced the ordering of the questions: the defined "functions of the interviewer" (i.e., to establish a comfortable working alliance), professional experience in terms of identifying the least threatening questions and presenting them

first, the suggestions and revisions offered by other experienced professionals who reviewed the format, and the reactions of subjects during the piloting phase.

Questions A and B, and Questions 1 through 12 on the interview format related directly to one of the main purposes of this study: to have the subjects identify their significant others, adults and peers, and then to determine what it was about these significant persons that made them so important to the selves of the subjects. The logical place to begin such a study was to first establish who the subjects regarded as significant others:

A. What three (3) ADULTS then come to your mind . . . as people who can affect the way that you <u>see</u> yourself, or can affect the way that you <u>feel</u> about yourself?

B. What three (3) KIDS, then come to your mind . . . as kids who can affect the way that you <u>see</u> yourself or can affect the way that you <u>feel</u> about yourself?

The construction of Questions 1 through 6 was guided by the general considerations previously discussed and by the previous research and theory. For example, the conclusions of Juhasz (1989, pp. 583-84), the findings of Burns (1979, p. 272), Rosenberg (1979), and Greenberg et al. (1983), and the concepts of Kohut (1971) were incorporated into the construction of the questions.

The first six questions were directed at developing a comprehensive and specific picture of how these important others were perceived. The questions provided an opportunity to observe, early in the process, the motivation and ability of subjects to perceive and

report on the broad range of reactions to significant others; to observe how well the subjects recognized, dealt with, and integrated discrepant perceptions and affects. The questions follow:

1. What words or phrases come to mind--what words or phrases would you use to describe _____ ? Please list at least five of these descriptors.

2. What are two (2) things about _____ that you like BEST?

3. What are two (2) things about _____ that you like LEAST or even DISLIKE?

4. What sorts of things might _____ do or say--that could result in you feeling GOOD about yourself or liking yourself even more?

5. What sorts of things might _____ do--or say--that could result in you feeling ANNOYED or MAD?

6. What sorts of things might _____ do--or say-- that could result in you feeling UPSET or HURT?

Questions 7 through 12 also related to one of the main purposes of the study and were intended to elicit similar information as questions 1 through 6, but they were presented from the standpoint of important others. These questions make two implied requests of the subjects. First, they had to employ empathy and objectivity in order to place themselves in the position of the other. Second, they had to be able to identify, objectify, conceptualize, and then verbalize self-needs in terms of the treatment that they sought from significant others and associate it with certain related affective states. The questions also were included because it was found in the pilot study that some early adolescents could respond more fully to questions of this nature than they could to the first six (more direct ?) types of questions. It also has been found in clinical practice that such questions tended to elicit information that was easier to operationalize in the relationship

with important others. Questions 11 and 12 asked the subjects to report on how they believed their mothers and fathers would describe them. As was previously discussed, "an individual's perception or interpretation of other's behavior is more important . . . than the actual behavior" (Demo et al., 1987, p. 707). Such questions were also likely to reveal other perceived attitudes toward the self that might not have been as clearly identified by previous questions. Questions 7 through 12 follow:

7. If you were your PARENT, what sorts of things would you do, how would you treat (you/subject's name) to help you to feel better --to help you to feel GOOD--about yourself?

8. If you were your PARENT, what sorts of things would you NOT do, how would you try NOT to treat (you/subject's name) so that you would not end up feeling UPSET, HURT, or ANGRY?

9. If you were your good FRIEND, what sorts of things would you do, how would you treat (you/subject's name) to help you to feel better--to help you feel GOOD--about yourself?

10. If you were your good FRIEND, what sorts of things would you NOT do, how would you try NOT to treat (you/subject's name) so that you would not end up feeling UPSET, HURT, or ANGRY?

11. If I ask your MOTHER to describe you, what would she say--what words or phrases do you think that she would use?

12. If I ask your FATHER to describe you, what would he say--what words or phrases do you think that he would use?

Questions 13 through 16 were directly related to the second overall purpose of the study--the self's recognition of and efforts at emotional self-regulation. Kohut (1971, 1973, 1977), maintained that the ability to modulate dynamic, affective states, to self-sooth, to maintain and experience pleasant feelings about the self, that is, a sustained sense of self-esteem, were important functions of a self that is experienced as "cohesive . . . vital . . . vigorous . . . and

[having] functional harmony" (Kohut & Wolf, 1978, p. 414). Bednar et al. (1989) placed substantial emphasis on the role of coping as a vital component of self-esteem. They believe that "the essential construction of self-esteem occurs in the process of exercising coping, or conversely, avoiding responses" (p. 35). Coping, in direct contrast to avoiding, "is associated with favorable self-evaluative processes, feelings, and perceptions" (p. 116). Kohut also maintained, and offered clinical examples to support his position, that self-experiences of hurt, embarrassment, and anger were related to varying degrees of self-injury, often experienced in relationship with significant others (Kohut, 1973). Questions 13 through 16 follow:

13. Think of the times when you were feeling HURT, EMBARRASSED, or ANGRY--how did you try to deal with the feelings that you were having?

14. Think of the times when you were feeling PROUD, SUCCESSFUL, (or maybe SMART)--really good about yourself--how did you try to handle feelings that you were having? (What was--or what is--your style?)

15. How do you <u>generally</u> try to CALM yourself--STEADY yourself--when you are feeling very INTENSE (e.g., keyed up, a bit "hyper," or excited)?

16. (a) If you have been feeling lots of STRESS, under much PRESSURE--perhaps even WORRIED--what do you do?

    (After they answer the question, add--)
    (b) Who might you turn to?

Before beginning such a study it was difficult to know what additional instrumentation might be useful. As the data evolved it might be helpful to have other data, derived via another approach, to use as a supplement, and/or to compare with the interview data from this study. Miles and Huberman (1986) advised, "Have a good mix of pre-designed and open-ended instrumentation corresponding to the demands of

the different research questions, and to the extent of prior knowledge about the phenomenon being studied" (p. 45). Influenced by their thinking and after consultation with experienced researchers, it was decided to use the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). This instrument received "high recommendations in view of its very acceptable reliability coefficients . . . and construct validity" (Burns, 1979, p. 103). It is also brief, easy to administer, and congruent with the goals and format of this study. The RSE (see Appendix C) has ten items that ask subjects to consider various perceptions of, and attitudes toward the self (e.g., "I am able to do things as well as most other people"). There are four possible responses to each question: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. Two of the four responses have been found to represent feelings of low self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 291). The interviewer verbally administered the RSE which was consistent with the way that the rest of the study had been conducted and which permitted observation of subjects' reactions to the questions. The subjects' responses were recorded on the answer sheet adjacent to the questions. Any additional comments by, or observations of subjects were recorded. Later, the responses to the questions were tabulated and analyzed.

Data Collection Section

The Data Collection Section (see Appendix B) evolved from the pilot studies. It was constructed as a result of trial and error with careful consideration given to the most logical, efficient way to record the data from the subjects, and the most efficient way for retrieving and assembling the data for scrutiny and analysis once it had been

recorded in original form. The Data Collection Sheet followed the presentation of the interview format, "On Significant Others," and provided ample space for recording the subjects' responses to those specific inquiries. The front page of the section records basic background information about the subjects (i.e., name, birth date, school grade, school, parental situation, and referral source). Space is provided on pages 1 through 4 for recording the selections of significant others, both adults and peers, and for recording the replies that the subjects gave about these significant others, in response to the first six questions. These first four pages were structured to enable easy examination and study of (a) replies to each question, and/or (b) replies given for a particular significant other in response to the first six questions, and/or (c) to contrast the replies given for either significant other in response to specific questions. The last page of the Data Collection Section was created to provide a place for the interviewer to record other observations as well as to encourage the interviewer to consider the topics listed there as a way of reflecting on other aspects of the experience with the subjects. This section was constructed, based upon the experiences of the researchers, and influenced by the advice and guidelines provided by Miles and Huberman (1986, pp. 64-65, 236). After the interview was completed and the subjects had departed, the interviewer referred to the items on the last page of the section, entitled "General Observations/Reactions of Interviewer" and noted any additional ideas or impressions that were stimulated by the following questions:

-- Assessment of subject's attempt at serious, genuine, thoughtful response?

-- Reactions, feelings about quality and tone of relationship while with subject?

-- Questions that subject was slow to answer, struggled with, answered incompletely, or superficially?

-- Questions to pursue later?

Selection and Characteristics of Subjects

Prior to contacts with subjects, a brochure entitled "Learning About the 'Significant (Important) Others' in the Life of a Young Adolescent Male" was designed (see Appendix D). This brochure described the purposes of the research, the background of the investigator, how the subjects would be approached, what the mutual expectations would be, and invited potential subjects to contact the researcher if necessary.

The skills required in order to find potential resources and to develop a study population were aptly described by Kerlinger (1973). "The field researcher needs to be a salesman, an administrator, an entrepreneur, as well as an investigator" (p. 408). Approximately twenty different persons (e.g., administrators) and places that had potential subjects were contacted in order to select a group for this study. The sources selected were representative of the three types of places that had been contacted--a clinical practice group, a junior high middle school, and a church youth group. These places were suitable because they could provide subjects who met the criteria of age and gender. These places were interested in and supportive of (this) research, and offered their cooperation, readily agreeing to provide the

assistance and the special space that was needed.

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, no attempt was made to randomize the sample. All of the subjects had parental consent to participate, but some participated with varying degrees of parental urging. Some parents, who had been contacted, had refused to let their sons participate, while others insisted that their sons participate despite the boy's resistance. What effect it had on the group selected is not possible to determine.

The 27 subjects were Caucasian and from similar socioeconomic (middle to upper-middle class) and educational backgrounds. They attended junior high schools or high schools that are regarded as top quality educational institutions. Of the 27 subjects, 11 (41%) were from the clinic group, 9 (33%) were from the middle school, and 7 (26%) were from the church group. They ranged in age from 12 to 15.5, with 13 boys (48%) being 13 years old. The boys were in grades 6 through 9 with 20 boys (74%) in either grade 7 or 8. Twenty-two boys (over 80%) lived with their natural parents.[1] The subjects from the clinical practice group differed from the other two groups in that they had been referred to the clinic for psychological assessment and for possible psychological help. There was no noticeable difference, however, in the participation between this group and the other two. (Two of the three most troubled boys in the study were <u>not</u> a part of this referral group.)

The three groups were seen at the sites from which they were referred. Details were worked out with the administrators at these

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[1] <u>Statistical Abstracts, 1987</u>, reported that 79% of Caucasian children under 18 live with both natural parents (p. 52).

locations to obtain rooms that would be private, quiet, and regularly available. The clinic had a room that met these requirements. At the school, the principal provided his spacious office. The church had limited private space, so a reserved and confidential space was established behind the furnace room. Unless something unusual arose (e.g., illness), subject were seen on a weekly basis for approximately 45 minutes.

Procedure

In each of the three settings, someone served as the liaison/coordinator. This person assisted in parent and subject contacts and helped to establish interviewing space and schedules. In the school, the principal served in this capacity. He handled all contacts with prospective subjects and their parents, using the brochure that had been developed. He provided the list of eligible subjects and the signed permission slips (see Appendix E) for each. At the church, the youth director handled similar details. In that setting the researcher had a preliminary meeting with those boys who were interested in participating. Questions were answered and some contacts were established. In the clinic, early adolescent boys who had had some contact with the clinic were invited to participate. Meetings were scheduled based on times made available by the interviewer.

The overall approach incorporated sound clinical practices and some of the ways of diminishing bias. For example, confidentiality was defined and established, efforts were made to "think in instrument-design terms, to keep the research question firmly in mind, . . . to make sure the mandate is unequivocal for informants," and to have a

series of spaced visits (Miles & Huberman, 1986, pp. 46, 233-36). In the beginning of the initial interview with the subjects, the interviewer asked them to define what they understood to be the purposes of the meeting. The interviewer then provided whatever clarification was needed to establish the working agreement: to get the subjects' views about people who were important to them; to talk with the subjects about some of the feelings that they experienced and how they attempted to handle these feelings; to remind them that there would be at least three meetings, in order to provide the time and opportunity to accomplish the objectives. The next step was to complete the information on the front page of the Data Collection Section, and then proceed to the instructions and specific questions on the format, "On Significant Others."

The subjects were systematically guided through the thirty-six questions that composed "On Significant Others." Instructions included on the instrument were followed for each subject. Upon completing this entire format, the interviewer verbally administered the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE).

Besides administering "On Significant Others" and the RSE, the interviewer had three additional ongoing functions to perform: first, to record subjects' responses to the questions on the Data Collection Section; second, to listen carefully and exercise clinical judgment in deciding when and how to request elaboration; third, to note and record any observations that added meaning to the exchange. These notes referred to any behaviors considered out of the ordinary, related to the subject's presentation, affective tone, method and/or rate of response

to specific questions; to the patterns that emerged over the series of interviews, and to the way that the subjects related to the meeting, content, or interviewer. At the end of the first interview, plans were made or reaffirmed with the subjects concerning the next meeting.

Methods of Organizing and Analyzing the Data

What follows is a description of the basic orientation and procedures that directed the handling of the data. The Data Collection Section was constructed to facilitate the compiling of the subjects' responses to each question. Consistent with the exploratory nature of this study and with the approach of letting the definition and isolation of key variables be the end result of the study, each question was systematically studied in the same order as presented to the subjects. Responses to each question were listed, and the data were examined for the purpose of "creating, testing, and revising simple, practical and effective analysis methods" (Miles & Huberman, 1986, p. 17). The process of listing responses stimulated ideas about how to further organize them. In the process of listing, duplications, similar replies, and similar references (e.g., to physical characteristics) spontaneously emerged.

The researcher brought a particular mindset and a set of helpful guidelines, provided by Miles and Huberman (1986), to the task of converting the raw data into more usable form. First, the task was approached with the idea of being open to devising and trying out various ways of organizing and examining the data. It is helpful to think of "matrix construction [categorizations] as a creative, yet

systematic task. The issue is not whether one is building a 'correct' matrix, but whether it is a functional one that will give reasonable answers to the questions asked . . . be open to invention" (pp. 211, 252). Second, in the process of developing such structures, the following ideas were kept in mind: the research issue being explored, the specific aim of the particular analysis, and the "various procedures that are applicable to fulfilling the effort" (p. 245). The guidelines and suggestions provided by Miles and Huberman were helpful in deciding how to partition the data (pp. 211-12). In addition, the approaches and structures used by other researchers in organizing and analyzing similar kinds of data were reexamined, modified, and utilized as applicable.

Throughout the process of ordering and categorizing the data, the following guidelines were observed: Efforts were made to retain as many of the original responses as possible, and to be descriptive in presenting responses and in the construction of the categories. When responses were condensed and/or grouped, careful thought went into finding descriptive phrases that preserved the meaning of the responses. In establishing categories, the intent was to be as comprehensive as possible. When it was necessary to use more abstract terms to demarcate categories, specific examples were provided to illustrate what had been included and to allow for evaluation of the appropriateness of the clustering. When the tentative categories were established, the original replies were assigned intact. This allocation of the raw data to categories/clusters was examined by a researcher and two practicing clinicians who considered the appropriateness of the categories and of the assignment of the data to these categories. They raised questions

and suggested modifications that were incorporated into the final tables. The categorized data were studied from as many varied viewpoints and interrelationships as could be conceived, keeping in mind the goals of the study, the original question, and the previous theory and findings. Only the most predominant data and patterns were used as the basis for reporting on results and making inferences.

Summary

This exploratory study was structured to elicit personal meaning from the subjects in relationship to the goals of the research and placed no prior constraints on what the outcomes might be.

Two important elements of this methodology were the use of a trained and experienced child psychotherapist who conducted all of the interviews, and the interview format, "On Significant Others" and Data Collection section designed for use in eliciting and recording the responses of the subjects.

The subjects of the study were the twenty-seven Caucasian, middle-class, early adolescent males, selected from and interviewed at three different sites. The functions of the trained interviewer were to establish a working relationship with these subjects, to exercise clinical judgment in facilitating elaboration, and to accurately record replies. The derived data was then listed, studied, and carefully categorized taking into consideration the purposes of the particular question, the methods employed by previous researchers, and the preservation of originality and meaning. This research project differed from previously reported studies in that it combined unique purposes and approach (e.g., subjects seen over a series of interviews), and special

methods (e.g., interviews guided by a specially prepared format and conducted by a trained and experienced clinician).

Chapter IV will present the results of these efforts.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This study was constructed to learn more about how the early adolescent male perceived his significant others, what, specifically he perceived about those others contributed to their significance, and how he perceived and attempted to regulate the affects aroused in relationship with them. An interview format, "On Significant Others," was designed to elicit information specific to these questions. The chapter presents the results and analysis of the information derived from interviews with subjects.

Responses to questions 1 through 6 for adult significant others, Choices One and Two, are displayed in corresponding Tables 1 through 6. The responses concerning adult significant other Choice One, were studied separately from those about Choice Two, and then comparisons were made. Responses having to do with peer significant others, Choices One and Two, are displayed in corresponding Tables 8 through 12. Because there was no noticeable differences in the replies to peer Choice One and to Choice Two, data was combined for purposes of analysis. The responses to the questions will be analyzed and discussed in the same order in which the questions were presented to the subjects. The discussion will focus on the following topics and related results:

(a) Selection of three adult significant others (Question A on the interview format).

(b) Subjects' descriptors of adult significant others, Choices One and Two (Question 1).

(c) Subjects' responses to adult significant other, Choice One, in terms of likes and dislikes and behaviors of this significant other that contributed to specific feeling states about the self (Questions 2 through 6 on interview format).

(d) Subjects' responses to adult significant other, Choice Two, also in terms of likes and dislikes and behaviors of this significant other that contributed to specific feeling states about the self.

(e) Comparison of responses to adult significant others, Choices One and Two (derived from responses to interview format Questions 1 through 6).

(f) Subjects' conception of "good parenting" for someone like themselves (Questions 7 and 8).

A similar procedure will be followed in analyzing and discussing the data related to peer significant others. This discussion will focus on the following topics and related results:

(a) Selection of three peer significant others (Question B on interview format).

(b) Subjects' descriptors of peer significant others, Choices One and Two (Question 1).

(c) Subjects' responses to peer significant others, Choices One and Two, in terms of likes and dislikes and behaviors of peer significant others that contributed to specific feeling states about the self.

(d) Subjects' conception of "being a good friend" to someone like themselves (Questions 9 and 10).

The remainder of this chapter looks at the following topics and related results:

(e) Perceptions of parents' descriptions of subjects (Questions 11 and 12).

(f) Methods of coping with specific emotions evoked in interpersonal relationships (Questions 13 through 16).

(g) Responses to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

(h) Some case examples.

Selection of Three Adult Significant Others (Question A)

The predominant choices of the subjects were mothers, fathers, and relatives in general. Over 80% of the adults selected for the three choices were relatives. Seventy percent (19 subjects) chose their mother as their first choice. Five chose either their father or another male relative as first choice. Again, 70% of the subjects (19 boys) selected their natural father as their second choice. Two selected another male and four selected their mother (two of these boys had originally selected their father as their first choice). The boys took more time deciding on their third choices, and these choices were more varied. Sixty percent of the subjects (16 boys) chose a relative. A grandparent was selected in seven instances with uncles, fathers, sisters, and brothers named in that order. Eight boys chose a teacher or a family friend as their third selection; two were unable to select a third choice.

Descriptors of Adult Significant Others Choices One and Two (Question 1)

It was possible and feasible to use the same categories for grouping the descriptors of both Choices One and Two. The raw data were clustered into three categories depicted in Table 1: attitudes/ characteristics of other, behavior of other, and other (i.e., additional) descriptions of other. Because there was potential overlap between the first and second of the above categories, the following

guidelines were established: If the subject's description was presented as a noun or adjective, as the other's state of "being" (e.g., "funny, friendly, thoughtful, caring, understanding"), it was inserted under the first category. Verb descriptors, descriptions of other's "doing" (e.g., "helps, gives, compliments, sets limits, shows patience/ restrain"), were placed under the second category.

TABLE 1.--Descriptors of Adult Significant Others Choices One and Two

	Choices			
	One		Two	
Categories	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Attitudes/characteristics (funny, friendly, thoughtful, caring, understanding)	43	34	47	40
Behaviors (helps, gives, compliments, sets limits, restrains)	40	31	23	20
Other descriptors (physical appearance, interests, talents, job functions)	44	35	46	40
Total Responses	127	100	116	100

Analysis of the descriptors of Choice One revealed that the responses of the subjects referred almost equally to attitudes/ characteristics (34%), behaviors (31%), and other more objective descriptors (35%) of significant other (mother in 70% of the instances). Almost two-thirds (65%) of the responses referred to attitudes/

characteristics and interpersonal behaviors of significant others.

Adult Choice Two was "father" in 70% of the instances and male in 80% of the selections. The descriptors of Choice Two also connoted pleasant and positive traits concerning this significant other. The boys did not as often perceive (perhaps observe ?) their second choice in a "doing" mode as they did their first choice. Slightly less than 20% of the descriptors had to do with such behaviors. The descriptors of Choice Two more often conveyed ambivalence and negative qualities perceived in relationship to this significant other (e.g., ". . . is loud . . . barks . . . is short-tempered . . . teases . . . is a pain").

When asked to describe their adult significant others, the boys responded in ways which are characteristic of early adolescents. The attitudes and "qualities of relationships" that were reported were generally positive and pleasant (Burns, 1979, p. 166). The descriptors that were given for both choices covered the same range of responses; they contained about the same proportion of replies having to do with attitudes and interpersonal traits.

Likes and Dislikes of Adult Significant Other Choice One (Questions 2 and 3)

After studying the replies to Questions 2 and 3, it was decided to use the same method of categorization used to organize the replies to Question 1. This categorization is displayed in Tables 2 and 3. Again, the first two categories refer to qualities and behaviors manifest in interpersonal relationships. The first category, "Attitudes/ characteristics," refers to the other's "being," while the second category, "Behaviors," depicts the other's "doing." The descriptors

TABLE 2.--Best-Liked Qualities of Adult Significant Others

Categories	Choice	
	One	Two
Attitudes/characteristics		
Caring, thoughtful, friendly	18	3
Humorous	1	7
Generous	--	4
Fair	1	3
Miscellaneous	--	3
Total	20	20
Behaviors		
Listens/understands	11	2
Helps/assists	13	7
Respects (e.g., privacy)	5	--
Does things with	4	--
Mutually enjoying company/sharing interests	--	19
Miscellaneous	3	--
Total	36	28
Other traits/behaviors	3	3
Total responses	59	51

TABLE 3.--Least-Liked Qualities of Adult Significant Others

Categories	Choice	
	One	Two
Attitudes/characteristics		
Provocative/argumentative	--	12
Stubborn	5	--
Unfair	3	3
Too restrictive	6	--
Unavailable	4	5
Total	18	20
Behaviors		
Handling anger	15	20
(Being) embarrassing/humiliating	4	6
Total	19	26
Other traits/behaviors	5	3
Total responses	42	49

that composed the third category were presented in a more objective manner by the subjects, and did not refer to traits or behaviors that were an integral part of interpersonal relationships. That is not to say that the subjects had no feelings about them, be it admiration for a talent or distain for alcohol abuse. After the subjects' original replies were categorized, they then were examined for the possibility of combining them. For example, it was decided to include replies like "caring, thoughtful, friendly" into one group. In the judgment of the researcher, these three terms connoted similar meaning.

In Question 2, the subjects were asked "What are two things that you like best about . . . (mother in over 70% of the instances)?" Subjects' responses indicated that they liked the caring, thoughtful, friendly qualities of this other. They liked the good communication skills of this valued other--that is, "listens, understands, and talks with." Third, this important other was appreciated for helping and assisting. Perhaps these latter two sets of behaviors of significant other are the methods through which the "caring" got conveyed? These three composite groups encompassed over 70% of the replies to this question.

The responses of most of the subjects were prompt, straightforward, and unambivalent. Only three boys showed any hesitancy. One stated, "This is hard!" while proceeding; the other two boys struggled with their replies.

In regard to things about significant other that were "liked least or even disliked" (see Table 3, column one), over one-third of the responses expressed dissatisfaction about the way Choice One handled/expressed anger. Their complaints had to do with the others being too quick to anger or too inpatient, or with the methods the other used to express anger (e.g., snubbing, yelling and screaming, displacing). Additional characteristics that were liked least are encompassed in the following five groupings which represent over 50% of the responses: the others being too restrictive--in general rules (e.g., "can't go out on school nights") or in type of punishment (e.g., "grounded for a week for being one-half hour late"), for being unavailable (e.g., working), for being too stubborn, for behaving in ways that were embarrassing to the

boy (e.g., boasting about, "evaluating" the boy with a third party), and for being unfair (e.g., in regard to siblings).

Behaviors of Adult Significant Others (Choice One) That Contributed to Specific Feelings About the Self (Questions 4-6)

Question 4 asked the subjects to consider what the adult significant other did or said that contributed to the boy's feeling good about himself or liking himself even more. The results are summarized in Table 4, column one. Almost 80% of the replies fell into two categories--congratulates/compliments (over 55%) and supports/assists (almost 30%). The compliments had to relate to something valued by the boy, however; achievement and success in school were predominant (i.e., over one-half of the replies). Compliments related to athletic ability or success, talents (artistic ability) and character traits (e.g., hard-working) cumulatively were as numerous as the compliments related to school performance.

Significant others displayed "support/assistance," for example, by attending (e.g., school events) and by appreciating/respecting (e.g., ideas and opinions). The "assists" referred to the adult providing a benign nudge when the boy seemed resistive and/or scared about moving ahead with something that a part of <u>him</u> really wanted (e.g., to try out for, apply for an opportunity or to lose weight).

The replies of four boys were atypical of the rest. When Mike[1] heard the question, he was puzzled, "Don't understand it." When

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[1]The names used throughout this study are fictitious to protect confidentiality. The same name, however, is used whenever that subject is (again) referred to.

TABLE 4.--Traits/Behaviors That Evoked Good Self-Feelings

Responses	Choice	
	One	Two
Congratulates/compliments	30	20
Supports/assists	15	11
Shares with	4	--
Rewards (for achievements)	--	5
Takes along with	--	4
Manages emotions (i.e., "stays cool")	--	3
None	3	4
Total responses	52	47

clarified, he matter-of-factly replied, "Nothing!" Paul had the same initial reply as Mike, but then paused (settled down) and said, "She sometimes says, 'Thanks, you're a good helper,'" when he gives his mother a hand, which he routinely resists doing. Angry Edward staunchly maintained, "Nothing!" Jack's reply was more prolonged, as he announced, "This is a hard question." After a thoughtful pause, he apologetically explained that, "She is usually letting me down--not building me up!"

Question 5 asked the subjects to report on things that significant other did or said "that could result in you feeling annoyed or mad." Three types of behaviors of the significant other (over two-thirds of the replies) provoked feelings of annoyance or anger within the boys (see Table 5, column one). These behaviors included tendencies of the important other to tease, denounce, demean, be critical of subject; the others being too quick, too intense, and too harsh in

expressing anger; and subjects' dissatisfaction with methods of discipline used by important others.

TABLE 5.--Traits/Behaviors That Evoked (Degrees of) Anger

Responses	Choice	
	One	Two
Handling anger/being too harsh	8	15
Being unfair	4	11
Teasing/denouncing/demeaning	9	7
Being unempathetic/unappreciative	1	5
Method/type of discipline administered	6	5
Boy: "Always mad at."	--	4
Miscellaneous (e.g., personal quirks)	6	--
Total responses	34	47

Question 6 asked the subjects to consider things that the significant other might "do or say that could result in you feeling upset or hurt." These results are reported in Table 6, column one. Upon reflection, ten boys (over 35% of the subjects) replied, "Nothing," in response to this question. That is, they could think of no such feeling-outcome that resulted from their exchanges with this significant other. The remainder of the subjects reported feeling upset or hurt when important other accused, blamed, or "labeled" them (e.g., "liar . . . dumb"); when important other teased, depreciated, "rubbed it in," insulted (e.g., concerning lack of school achievement after much effort); when other was "inconsiderate" (e.g., shares confidentialities). These three groupings contained over 60% of the replies.

TABLE 6.--Traits/Behaviors That Evoked Upset/Hurt Feelings

Responses	Choice	
	One	Two
Teases/depreciates/unduly criticizes	7	11
Accuses/blames/"labels"	11	5
Other's angry reactions	4	10
Being "inconsiderate"	6	--
None	10	9
Total responses	38	35

In responding to Questions 4 through 6, the subjects were being asked to make a more subjective response than previously. They were being asked to consider how someone's behavior had evoked a particular feeling state within them. Second, they were asked to make the distinction between behaviors of significant others that resulted in feelings of annoyance and anger versus those that generated feelings of upset and hurt. It was anticipated that this request might be more difficult and/or produce more reluctance in the subjects. This did not turn out to be the case, however, in that none of the subjects showed any hesitancy in response to either question.

In summary, these early adolescent males indicated that good feelings about themselves were enhanced when they perceived this important adult, Choice One, complimenting them and demonstrating support for them. Various degrees of anger were aroused when this important other did things that directly diminished self-regard/self-esteem, for example, by various depreciating behaviors. Subjects

experienced varying degrees of anger when other was too impulsive, intense, or harsh in expressing anger; at the way this adult went about meting out discipline.

Over one-third of the subjects reported not experiencing upset or hurt in this important interpersonal relationship. The rest of the subjects were likely to have such affective reactions when blamed and/or name-called, when demeaned in various ways, or when treated with lack of consideration.

Likes and Dislikes of Adult Significant Other Choice Two (Questions 2 and 3)

As Table 2, column two, demonstrates, there were three things about this important other that were liked best: mutually enjoying the company of and sharing interests with this valued other (over 35% of the replies), appreciating the help and assistance of this important other, and enjoying the humorous qualities of this significant adult. These three groupings contained almost 65% of the replies.

As summarized in Table 3, column two, the subjects reported (65% of the responses) that they disliked the provocative, argumentative attitude of this significant other (e.g., "gives me a hard time"), and the way that this important other handled anger (e.g., shouts and yells too much, is impatient, at times heavy-handed, sometimes vindicative).

Behaviors of Adult Significant Other (Choice Two) That Contributed to Specific Feelings About the Self (Questions 4-6)

About 65% of the responses to Question 4 fell into two groups displayed in Table 4, column two. The boys felt good about themselves when significant other complimented them on issues significant to them,

and supported and assisted them in everything from school work to repairs. Four of the subjects reported having received little or nothing from this person that would have enhanced their good self-feelings.

In reply to Question 5 (Table 5, column two), the boys stated that they felt annoyed or mad at the way that significant other handled anger (e.g., is too impatient, too eruptive, too intense, too harsh, too vindicative at times) and was unfair, for example, in his stance and in his demands. These two categories contained 55% of the responses. Four respondents reported that they were chronically annoyed or mad at this significant other.

Replies to Question 6, as displayed in Table 6, column two, revealed that subjects felt upset or hurt when other teased, depreciated, "rubbed it in" (e.g., their foibles and failures), or insulted them, and with the way this important other handled angry reactions, (e.g., too quick and/or too intense). These two categories contained over 60% of the responses to this question. Nine boys (33%) stated that they could not recall anything that significant other did that resulted in such feeling states. One boy added,"He sure could do it if he wanted to, but he doesn't."

In summary a composite of these boys' significant other, Choice Two, turned out to be father and male in most instances. Mutually enjoying the company and sharing interests with this other were very important in contributing to the boys' good self-feelings. The boys felt especially good when this significant other complimented or assisted them. On the other hand, they disliked the provocative,

argumentative attitude of this person and when other was perceived as "unfair." The boys distained the manner and method that this important adult used to express anger. Sometimes it evoked anger and sometimes hurt feelings within the boy. The other's teasing and depreciating were also likely to evoke similar feelings of hurt.

A Comparison of Responses to Adult Significant Others Choices One and Two (Questions 1-6)

Tables 1 through 6 were studied by comparing subjects' responses to Choice One versus Choice Two. When examined in terms of frequencies, the results showed that when the subjects were asked to provide descriptors (see Table 1) they produced over 70% more related to behaviors of Choice One than Choice Two. These behaviors referred to perceived interactions of significant other with subjects. A similar trend was noted in the replies to Question 2, Table 2, ". . . liked best about?" The subjects provided almost 30% more replies related to the things that significant other Choice One did in comparison to Choice Two.

Content related responses to Question 2, having to do with things that the subjects "liked best about" significant other, included liking the helpfulness and assistance that both Choice One and Two provided. The remaining most prevalent responses for both choices differed, however, and again portrayed a contrast in perception and relating. The subjects liked best the "caring, friendly, loving, thoughtful" attitudes of Choice One. The attitudes/characteristics of Choice Two that they liked best were more varied and summarized in six categories. Their most prevalent response in regard to Choice Two had

to do with liking best "the company of, the sharing of mutual interests with" this important other. No such responses were given for Choice One.

In response to Question 3, Table 3--". . . liked least about?"--subjects offered 37% more replies related to disliked behaviors of Choice Two in contrast to behaviors of Choice One. This was the reverse of the responses to Question 2. So it appears that Choice One was perceived as doing more things that the subjects liked, while Choice Two was perceived as doing more things that the subjects disliked. Their replies (almost 25%) revealed that they disliked the provocative, argumentative attitude that they perceived Choice Two to manifest. They expressed no such dislikes about Choice One. With both choices, however, they expressed dislike at the way that significant others handled their anger. Almost 40% of the total replies for both choices were contained in this category.

Replies to Question 4, presented in Table 4, demonstrated that these early adolescent males were very aware that good feelings about the self were heightened when either of the significant others congratulated or complimented them (50% of total replies) and when both significant others supported or assisted them (over 25% of total replies) as was previously defined.

Replies to Question 5, as illustrated in Table 5, clustered around three sets of responses that indicated that subjects felt annoyed or mad at the ways that both significant others handled their own anger. A case-by-case analysis revealed that most of these persons were male (over 80%). Subjects also experienced annoyance and anger when these

others teased, denounced, or demeaned them, and when these others were, in the judgment of the subjects, "unfair" in their stance or demands. These three clusters of responses contained over two-thirds of the replies to this question, that is, "the things . . . that resulted in [subjects] feeling annoyed or mad."

In Question 6, the subjects were asked to report on things that significant others might do or say that "could result in your feeling upset or hurt?" As depicted in Table 6, over one-third of the subjects, after consideration, concluded that they could not think of anything that these significant adults did that contributed to self-hurt. Four of these boys gave this response for both choices, although one of them listed more distant, non-relatives for both his choices. It is important to note that there are differences among the subjects in terms of the frequency with which they experienced hurt; subjects' replies could be placed along a continuum. There were boys who only occasionally, perhaps around specific issues and/or instances, experienced hurt. On the other end of the continuum were boys who were bursting with examples of hurtful experiences that were an all too-regular part of their lives.

Again, replies to Question 6 indicated that some subjects felt upset and/or hurt by the angry reactions of Choice Two. The boys reported that they were more likely to be "upset/hurt" by the teasing, depreciating behavior of Choice Two than they were by such behavior from Choice One. That ratio is reversed, however, when the other was hurtful by "accusing, blaming, labeling." Over twice as many replies of this nature were attributed to Choice One than to Choice Two.

Questions 5 and 6 were designed to determine how subjects, at this stage of development, would respond to such questions, and whether they would be able to make the required differentiation. The boys seemed to have no problem distinguishing anger from hurt as it related to interaction with important others. However, the replies to these two inquiries raised other interesting questions, beyond the objectives of this study. For example, what determined whether an outside stimulus situation evoked anger or hurt? Were some of these reactions relatively consistent with person and/or event over time?

Summary

According to these findings, there were areas in which significant other, Choice One (mother in 70% of the instances) and Choice Two (father in 70% of the instances), were perceived quite similarly by the subjects. Almost 60% of the words and phrases used to organize the replies to Questions 2 through 6 referred to responses that were given for both adult choices. Of the subjects, 35% reported that they could not think of anything that these significant others did that contributed to self-hurt. More specifically, these subjects liked the compliments and the support and assistance that both important others provided.

On the other hand, there were some noticeable differences when the reported perceptions of significant other Choice One were compared with Choice Two. In response to two separate questions, the boys described Choice One as displaying more interpersonal interaction. They liked best the "kind, caring, friendly"attitude of Choice One but the "company of, the sharing their interests with" Choice Two. The

responses about Choice Two were also more ambivalent. For example, the subjects disliked the provocative and argumentative attitude of Choice Two but expressed no such dissatisfaction about Choice One. Complaints concerning handling of anger were more frequently associated with Choice Two. The subjects were more likely to be "upset/hurt" by the teasing, depreciating behavior of Choice Two than they were by such behavior from Choice One. Choice Two was more often seen as being unfair in stance and demands than was Choice One. In contrast, Choice One was more likely to be seen as the person who was accusatory, name-calling, and inconsiderate.

Of the 23 boys who selected their mother as their first or second choice, 1 talked about a conflictual relationship with her and 3 conveyed clear ambivalence about her. Of the 21 boys who selected their father as their first or second choice (19 subjects), 5 reported regular conflict with him and 4 expressed clear ambivalence about him. Four boys did not select their mother or father for either their first or second choices. Two of these boys are discussed in the "Case Examples" section at the end of this chapter. They are presented as "Jeremy" and "Edward."

On Being a Good Parent to One's Self (Questions 7 and 8)

In Questions 7 and 8, subjects were asked to take the "parents" perspective on themselves, to consider how they would relate as a parent, to someone like themselves, in order to maximize "good" feelings and minimize "bad" ones. These responses are reported in Tables 7 and 8. Responses were varied and were placed in seven, somewhat overlapping

categories. Most of the findings were not surprising in light of the previous data. The boys would compliment and congratulate regularly, and would reassure and encourage, for example, when boy is vacillating or during "hard" times. They would help and assist, for example, with school work or in meeting personal objectives. They would do casual, fun things with the boy and provide rules--"reasonable" ones--with enforcement. In interpersonal exchanges, they would try to be "reasonable," that is, to "really listen, and discuss things reasonably . . . rationally . . . calmly." They would try to treat this young person kindly, keeping control and restraints on anger. These six categories encompassed over 90% of the responses.

TABLE 7.--On Being a Parent to One's Self

Response Categories			
DO--To Encourage Good Self-Feelings		REFRAIN From--To Prevent Upset/Hurt/Anger	
Compliment/congratulate	9	Demeaning	13
Do things with	8	Being as prohibitive	13
Reassure/encourage	8		
Be "reasonable" in communication	7	"Excessive" harshness (verbal and physical)	14
Help/assist	8	Being <u>too</u> lenient	5
Provide "reasonable" rules	8	Breaking promises	4
Treat kindly/modulate anger	5		
Be a good provider	4		
Total responses	57		49

In order to prevent ". . . upset, hurt, anger" they would refrain from being demeaning, for example, by teasing, belittling, name-calling, "putting down." They would not be "overly" prohibiting, for example, in terms of rules or in terms of a "bossy," controlling manner. They would refrain from "harsh" behavior, for example, yelling or striking. These responses contained almost 80% of the replies to this question. Noteworthy, in the boys' replies to Question 7, was the fact that unlike reactions to previous questions, many of them hesitated in their initial response. A request to repeat and explain the question was common. Once they got a sense of the request, however, it seemed to evoke a delighted challenge in most of them. Their replies to Question 8 had a noticeably different affective tone from their replies to any previous questions. As a group, they seemed more subdued, pensive, and sad.

Selection of Three Peer Significant Others (Question B)

The subjects' selections of peer significant others were in contrast to their selections of adult significant others. Over 85% of the total selections were male and over 90% of these selections were non-relatives. Over 80% of the adult choices were relatives and represented a more balanced selection of male and female.

Descriptors of Peer Significant Others (Question 1)

The descriptors that the subjects gave about their peer significant others were different in noticeable ways from those that they gave for adult significant others. These results are summarized in

Table 8. The number of replies for peers were fewer (15%) than those for adults. However, the subjects used over twice as many terms or phrases as descriptors, and these descriptors were more difficult to categorize. They made references to characteristics not attributed to adult significant others. For example, some of the replies referenced to negative traits of the peer other (e.g., "a bully"), to "strange" (i.e., unusual) behaviors, to admired qualities (e.g., popularity), and to physical attributes (e.g., size and strength). Responses were organized into six categories depicted in Table 8. As previously stated, the responses to peer Choices One and Two were combined for analysis, since there were no noticeable differences in the data.

TABLE 8.--Descriptors of Peer Significant Others

	Choice		
Categories	One	Two	Totals
Positive personal/interpersonal traits (nice, friendly, sharing, funny)	52	56	108
Physical qualities	19	16	35
Admired traits (smart, popular)	12	11	23
Descriptors (interests, active or passive)	11	11	22
Negative personal/interpersonal traits (loud, obnoxious, conceited, bully)	9	5	14
"Unusual" behaviors (quirks)	5	0	5
Total responses	108	99	207

Since subjects were describing peers who were identified as "important," it was not surprising to find that over 50% of the replies referred to positive, personal/interpersonal traits or qualities. "Nice," and "funny" were the two most prevalent responses (almost 50%) that composed this category. Physical qualities, size, strength, and ability, were referred to in about 17% of the responses. These descriptors might have been included with "admired" traits, since often there was a tone of admiration connected with the description. They were not, however, because these replies were not presented with the clear implication of admiration as were some of the traits listed in the "admired" category (e.g., "smart!"). References to physical attributes also formed a unique cluster all their own. If that category had been included with the "admired traits," which were made up predominantly of references to intellectual abilities, the two categories would have accounted for over one-fourth of the replies to this question.

In summary, when asked to give descriptors of their peer significant others, these early adolescent subjects referred to positive personal/interpersonal traits and qualities, physical characteristics related to size, strength, and ability, and admired traits usually related to academic ability. Over 80% of the replies of the subjects, concerning these important adolescent others, were contained in these three categories.

Two things were noticeable about the replies of the subjects. They were made quickly and spontaneously, as though these qualities were an integral part of the subjects' concept of the particular person. Yet, when asked to further define "nice," for example, the boys had more

difficulty than in doing so for adult subjects. Such terms, when applied to peers, seemed to represent a composite set of rather fixed perceptions. The reply of one subject was unique. This boy spontaneously characterized his friend as, "Carries much stuff in his pockets!"

Likes and Dislikes of Peer Significant Others (Questions 2 and 3)

The overall data, summarized in Table 9, is consistent with outcomes previously discussed. Subjects "most liked" the positive personal/interpersonal traits of these two important peers. More specifically they really liked how "nice . . . helpful and supportive . . . fun" these others were and the sharing of similar interests with them. These two categories contained over 80% of the subjects' responses. The subjects, however, attributed 30% more positive personal/interpersonal traits to Choice One than to Choice Two. It is noteworthy that the composite descriptions of peer significant others are a combination of the best liked characteristics of the adult significant others, that is, the friendly, thoughtful qualities of Choice One, the helpfulness and assistance of both choices, and the companionship of Choice Two.

When questioned about what the subjects "liked least" or "disliked" about peer Choice One, about 15% of the boys replied "Nothing," and over 20% had the same response in regard to Choice Two (see Table 10). The replies of the remaining subjects could be summarized as follows: They disliked others' attempts to depreciate and belittle and those instances when they felt insufficiently regarded

TABLE 9.--Best-Liked Qualities of Peer Significant Others

Categories	Choice		Total Replies
	One	Two	
Sharing similar interests	12	12	24
Positive personal/interpersonal traits (nice, kind, helpful, supportive, fun, good self-control)	38	29	67
(Other) descriptors/admired traits (available, smart, spontaneous, popular, etc.)	7	11	18
Total responses	57	52	109

(e.g., forgotten about, not considered, or another being more preferred). They also disliked the ways that peer others handled anger, especially their tendency to be too harsh; or when peer other were "too pushy," that is, used physical force to try to influence behavior or as retribution. These four categories contained over 70% of the responses. Subjects had over twice as many complaints about the way that the significant other Choice One, as compared to Choice Two, handled anger and about 50% more complaints about the way that Choice Two tried to depreciate and belittle the subjects. This suggests the possibility that Choice Two tended to handle anger by various forms of other-depreciation, such as "put-downs."

TABLE 10.--Least-Liked Qualities of Peer Significant Others

Responses	Choice		Total Replies
	One	Two	
Method of expressing anger	11	5	16
Efforts to diminish self-regard	8	12	20
Ignoring/favoring another	10	10	20
Being too pushy	9	8	17
Nothing	4	6	10
Miscellaneous (dishonest, procrastinates, other's family, etc.)	8	10	18
Total responses	50	51	101

Summary

The most prevalent replies to Questions 2 and 3 provided a composite picture of the things that subjects tended to like best and least about their peer significant others. They very much liked the constellation of personal/interpersonal traits and behaviors that their important others portrayed. Active sharing of similar interests was another highly valued part of their relationship. On the other hand, they disliked feeling insufficiently regarded, or depreciated and/or belittled by these significant others. They also disliked instances in which significant other was being too "pushy," usually by exercising physical force, and the way that this other, at times, expressed and/or managed anger. These six categories contained over 75% of the subjects' replies to these two questions.

The data did not offer an obvious explanation as to why Choice One was chosen over Choice Two. However, Choice One did receive almost 30% more replies than Choice Two having to do with positive personal/interpersonal traits, and Choice Two received 50% more complaints than Choice One about being depreciating and belittling. As with the same set of questions related to adult significant others, the subjects showed no difficulty getting in touch with and articulating their likes and dislikes in regard to these important peers. Noteworthy was the facility with which the subjects identified a range of characteristics and behaviors of their peer significant others that they "liked least."

Behaviors of Peer Significant Others That Contributed to Specific Feelings About the Self (Questions 4-6)

The subjects were asked, "What sorts of things other might do or say that could result in you feeling good about yourself or liking yourself even more?" (See Table 11.) The resulting data showed little difference in the responses of the subjects to either Choice One or Choice Two. Being complimented, or given recognition, usually for achievement, dominated their responses (45%). When subjects had been asked the same question in regard to adult significant others, they responded similarly (43% of total replies). The remainder of replies, in contrast to those about adults, were rather evenly distributed among six other categories.

Questions 5 and 6 asked, "What sorts of things (other) might do or say that could result in feeling annoyed or mad, in feeling upset or hurt?" After listing and categorizing subjects' replies to these

TABLE 11.--Behaviors of Peer Significant Others That Evoked Good Self-Feelings

Categories	Choice	
	One	Two
Compliments/gives recognition	17	22
Reassures/assists	4	7
Shares/includes	8	4
Gentle/considerate with criticisms	3	2
Befriends/speaks well of	4	2
Mutually enjoy company	3	2
Miscellaneous	4	3
Total responses	43	42

questions, two patterns became evident. First, predominant responses to Questions 5 and 6 were similar for Choices One and Two. It, therefore, was decided to combine these replies and to examine them in total (see Table 12). Second, the replies to these questions could be contained under the same headings. So from the standpoint of the derived data, the questions were essentially duplications, although the boys did not seem to have any difficulty formulating self-differentiated replies to each question.

Eleven subjects (40% of total respondents) reported not being aware of feeling annoyed or mad at their Choice One or Choice Two. The rest of the boys reported feeling annoyed or mad when either of the peer others depreciated or teased, in ways perceived as hostile, demeaning, "rubbing it in," and/or at the other ways these peers handled their anger, such as temper outbursts, pouting, and blaming. These two categories contained almost 50% of the total responses related to these

TABLE 12.--Behaviors of Peer Significant Others That Evoked Negative Self-Feelings

	Annoyance/Anger Choice		Upset/Hurt Choice		
Responses	One	Two	One	Two	Total
Depreciates/teases	10	12	13	9	44
Method of handling/anger	9	8	2	3	22
Ignoring/overlooking/ preferring another	6	2	6	6	20
Being too physical	4	2	4	1	11
Disloyal	4	1	2	--	7
Boasts/brags	2	4	--	--	6
Miscellaneous	4	3	3	5	15
Nothing/does not happen	4	7	8	9	28
Total responses	43	39	38	33	153

two choices. In reply to Question 5, a number of the respondents added a qualification. They explained that there were things that significant other did that annoyed them or made them mad, but that these happenings were minor and/or infrequent.

According to the results of Question 6 (Table 12), over 60% of the subjects reported that they did not experience upset or hurt in their relationships with these peer significant others. Almost 50% of the replies were related to upset or hurt reactions due to being depreciated, that is, made fun of, berated, put-down, and to feeling excluded or ignored.

It is noted that subjects presented 15% more replies to the question concerning anger/annoyance than they did to the question related to upset/hurt. Complaints about the ways peer others handled anger appeared in their responses to both questions. This behavior, however, evoked over three times as many "annoyed/angry" responses from subjects in contrast to "upset/hurt" reactions. Perhaps these are illustrations of "anger begetting anger." Various forms of depreciation were as likely to evoke hurt as anger. Being overlooked or slighted evoked 50% more responses associated with upset or hurt than with anger in this age group. One-fourth (28) of the possible subject-responses (108) to these two sets of questions indicated that those subjects could think of "nothing" that peer significant other did or said that evoked feelings of anger and/or hurt. That data was examined more closely and showed that in regard to Question 5, 3 boys said, "Nothing" as their response to both Choice One and Choice Two. In regard to Question 7, the data revealed that 5 boys said, "Nothing" in their replies about both Choice One and Choice Two. So in actuality, this meant that 20 different boys, out of a possible 54 (37%), reported that they could think of "Nothing" that angered and/or hurt them in their interactions with their Choices One or Two. When discussing their adult significant others, a similar number of subjects (over 35%) reported that they could think of "Nothing" that these adult others did that resulted in upset/ hurt feelings. On the other hand, all of the subjects reported on traits and behaviors of adult significant others that evoked anger. However, these early adolescent boys did report experiencing "negative" affects, such as annoyance, anger, upset, hurt, when they perceived

themselves being depreciated, berated, put-down, being left out or ignored, and being the recipients of specific kinds of expressions of anger (which were more likely to evoke anger in subjects).

On Being a Good Friend to One's Self (Questions 9 and 10)

Questions 9 and 10 asked the subjects to ". . . pretend a bit . . . turn things around," to imagine that they were their own best friend. The raw data were grouped and combined as displayed in Table 13. Certain responses were combined because they represented the same basic theme, even though one set of responses was evoked by the question ". . . what would you do . . ." and the other by the question ". . . what would you not do . . . ." For example, the replies grouped under the category "treat with regard/consideration" (e.g., consider others' wishes, be understanding of others' mistakes, be gentle with criticism) are the positive expression of "not diminished self-regard" (e.g., by name-calling, put-downs, or belittlements). Almost 35% of the combined replies to these two questions, whether examined from the positive or negative standpoint, clustered around two categories and one unifying theme. The categories are, "treat with regard/consideration" and "not diminish self-regard." The unifying theme is, consideration of self-feelings. In addition, the subjects would have liked three things from this "imagined other" good friend: to include or invite and to not exclude; to be "pleasant in relationships," that is, friendly, expressive of affection, cheerful and not provocative or combative; to help, encourage, and be giving and to not withhold assistance and

support. These three groupings contained over 40% of the remaining replies.

TABLE 13.--On Being a Good Friend to One's Self

Categories	Frequencies		
	"Do"	"Not Do"	Total
Treat with regard/consideration; do not diminish self-regard	15	25	40
Include/invite; do not exclude	12	7	19
Help/encourage/be giving; do not refuse to assist	13	1	14
Compliment	9	--	9
Be pleasant in relationship; do not provoke/fight	6	12	18
Be loyal/reliable; does not be disloyal/unreliable	6	5	11
Miscellaneous	4	2	6
Total responses	65	52	117

Responses of subjects to previous questions highlighted how much the subjects sought compliments. The responses to these two questions, however, seemed to suggest that their first and foremost consideration in relationship with friends, was the safety and security of their basic self-regard/self-esteem.

Perceptions of Parent's Descriptions of Subjects (Questions 11 and 12)

Questions 11 and 12 attempted to elicit the adolescents' perceptions of significant others by asking subjects to report on how they believed their parents would describe them (Table 14). The responses of most of the subjects to these two questions were even more animated than usual as they provided a total of 218 descriptors. Despite these numbers, the resulting categories emerged naturally, were rather clearly demarcated, and easy to establish. Eight boys stated that they believed that both parents would describe them similarly. When such a reply was given, the subjects were re-read the reply that they had previously made, related to their mother. The responses for "father" were then recorded according to how the boy now replied. Frequently they made some slight modification and/or addition.

The Review of the Literature has discussed the developmental tendency of adolescents to report their perceptions of self and others in largely intrapersonal and/or interpersonal terms. That tendency is evident in the responses to these questions. Over 75% of the total replies described intrapersonal and/or interpersonal qualities.

These early adolescent subjects believed that their parents perceived them much more in terms of "traits and characteristics" than in terms of other attributes, such as talents and abilities. Less than 15% of the total replies referred to this facet of the self.

In characterizing mother's imagined perceptions, the subjects presented 23% more positive than negative descriptors. They offered 50% more positive attributions than negative descriptors in characterizing their father's imagined replies. The first three categories of Table 14

TABLE 14.--Perceptions of Parents' Descriptions of Subjects

Descriptors	(Projected) Responses	
	Mother	Father
Physical attributes	8	3
Talents/abilities	17	12
Interests	3	9
Total	28	24
Traits/Characteristics		
Positives:		
Appreciative/considerate/obedient	13	7
Outgoing/cheerful/humorous	10	12
Helpful	6	9
Nice/kind/caring	6	13
Energetic/determined/independent	5	6
Miscellaneous	2	7
Total	42	54
Negatives:		
Obnoxious/annoying/moody	7	8
Greedy/spoiled/inconsiderate	4	4
Irresponsible/lazy/useless	5	8
Impatient/easily frustrated	3	3
Absent-minded, odd/weird	6	5
Argumentative/bad attitude	2	2
Loud/wild	2	3
Miscellaneous	5	3
Total	34	36
Total responses to questions 11 and 12	104	114

have to do with terms referring to physical attributes, talents and abilities, and interests. They are more neutral and less judgmental from the standpoint of the imagined attributor, although not necessarily experienced that way by the subjects. When these three categories are combined with "positive traits/characteristics," over 65% of the responses attributed to mother and to father were of a neutral or positive quality. Based on this outcome, it appears that the majority of the subjects believed that their parents perceived them in predominantly neutral or positive ways. This also implies, as the data show, that the subjects also believed that their parents perceived certain parts of their selves in negative terms. Responses referring to negative characteristics of the self made up over 30% of the total replies.

Subjects also believed that their mothers perceived or regarded them differently, in some respects, from their fathers. She was believed to perceive them in terms of such positive traits or characteristics as being appreciative, considerate, obedient, polite, and attentive--that is, a "good boy?" Similarly, and surprisingly, the subjects believed that their fathers perceived them in such terms as "nice, kind, and caring." This projected perception was quite similar to the ways that they had described their adult significant other, Choice One, who was predominantly "mother."

In the section of the table that categorizes "negative traits/characteristics," some of the negative (projected) descriptors (e.g., the first three categories in that section) are hardly endearing terms; they are harsh, demeaning, and over-generalized descriptors. Yet a

number of the boys believed that this is at least one of the perceptions held by the parent; 16 of these terms are ascribed to each parent.

Most of the boys (over 60%) used descriptors that were a combination of positive, neutral, and negative phrases to characterize the ways that they thought their parents would describe them. Art's reply is an example: ". . . smart, athletic, argumentative, short, sometimes lazy." Another way of looking at the data, however, is in terms of how many boys believed that one or both parents would describe them by using either all negative or all positive terms. Over one-third of the boys believed that at least one parent perceived them in negative terms and one-fourth (7) boys believed that both of their parents perceived them in negative terms. Of the subjects, 45% from the clinic group believed that one or both parents perceived them in negative terms as compared to 25% of the subjects from the other two groups. Slightly over 10% of the subjects thought that both of their parents would describe them by using only positive terms; close to 20% of the subjects thought that at least one of their parents would describe them in positive terms.

These subjects were given the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Test (RSE),[1] a ten-item scale with four possible responses to each question. Half of the possible responses have been found to represent "low self-esteem." "Low self-esteem" responses composed 6% of the replies of those boys who believed that at least one parent perceived them in positive terms. Almost 10% of the responses of the boys who believed that at least one

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[1]These results are presented later in this chapter.

parent perceived them in negative terms contained "low self-esteem" replies.

When presented with Question 11, four boys stated and demonstrated in their replies that it was "hard" for them. Often subjects would include qualifiers in their responses (e.g., "smart but sometimes careless; sometimes . . . cheerful . . . smart . . . lazy") or "kind of weird," "a little strange." In some instances the subjects inserted their opinion concerning the believed parental perception (e.g., "bad attitude . . . but untrue; appreciative, unlike my brother").

In summary, something about this question generated additional enthusiasm in these early adolescent subjects; their responses were fruitful. They reported their projected perceptions in largely intrapersonal and/or interpersonal terms. The descriptors used by over 60% of the subjects were composed of positive, neutral and negative attributions about the self. Almost two-thirds of these reported perceptions had a neutral or positive quality about them and contributed to a good sense of self-regard/self-esteem. On the other hand, about one-third of the subjects' replies referred to negative traits and characteristics, some of them demeaning and over-generalized. The self had to somehow contend with and integrate these projected perceptions which contributed to diminished self-regard/self-esteem.

Some differences were noted in the ways that these subjects believed that their mothers perceived them as contrasted to their fathers. They also attributed more positive attributions to their fathers than they did to their mothers. Interestingly, they believed

that their fathers perceived them in much the same way as the subjects had described their mothers. One-third of the subjects believed that at least one parent perceived them entirely in negative terms while close to one-fifth of the subjects believed that at least one parent would describe them in positive terms only.

Coping With Emotions Evoked in Interpersonal Relationships (Questions 13-16)

After the replies to Question 13 were listed, various strategies were considered for establishing simple, clear, but relevant and meaningful organization of the data. Responses were grouped (Table 15) in terms of those intended primarily to escape from or eliminate the affect from conscious experience or to stay with, to deal with the issue or affect, whether by experiencing it and/or in an attempt to resolve it. In both instances diminution of unpleasant affect was the desired outcome.

The results showed that the subjects, as a response to feeling "hurt, embarrassed, or angry," were most likely to employ some form of divergence or avoidance as an attempt to eliminate the undesired feeling state. Over 55% of the replies came under this grouping, that is, trying to handle one's thoughts and one's actions in such a way as to eliminate the affective state. Three descriptive phrases composed the second broad grouping, "deal with affective state," and contained slightly more than 35% of the replies.

Some specific case examples demonstrate the various types and diversity of reactions, and illustrate the degree of psychological sophistication of responses. The responses of Jim and Ken were

TABLE 15.--Coping With Hurt/Embarrassment/Anger

Categories	Frequencies
Eliminating the affect state	
Avoid/remove self	15
Divert thoughts	16
Get active	8
Total	39
Deal with affective state	
Talk to someone	8
"Sit" with it	6
Apply cognition	11
Total	25
Miscellaneous	4
Total responses	68

representative of this group of subjects. Jim generally dealt with such arousal by "laying low, while feeling not good"; he "let it blow over." If his parents have really hurt him, he "tries to leave and go to a friend's--to take off." Ken tries to "work real hard at something--for example, run the dog, do lots of exercise--those things seem to help." If such a reaction occurred at school (his idea), "I would keep it in, until I got home and then do some of the same things, for example, listen to real loud music, sing along with it real loud." Gary's reply was more differentiated and elaborate than that of most of his peers. He dealt separately with such affective reactions. If he felt hurt, for example, he "would let his feelings out . . . go home as soon as

possible and talk to my mom." If embarrassed, he "tries to go along with it, to make a joke of it, or sometimes I try to change the subject, try to forget about it." In dealing with angry feelings, he "would not blow up--would hold it inside--even though I would be feeling like 'I need to blow up.'"

Joe, a boy who seemed troubled about some of his relationships with significant others, was thoughtful and reflective in his reply as he described his internal operations. He would try to ". . . let things --let me--cool off. I just sort of take one part of me off to the side--to try to figure out what I'm mad about, to look at it from another angle, before I decide to do anything."

The replies of two of the boys, who described very poor and predominantly hostile relationships with significant others, were markedly different from the replies of any of their peers. They would have responded directly, vehemently, and with enraged outbursts. For example, Edward said that he ". . . would swear at them . . . probably until my face turned blue . . . same way when they try to hurt me." When embarrassed, he usually "turns red and gets out of the room immediately."

Question 14, in contrast to Question 13, asked the subjects to tell how they would deal with more pleasant affective states, for example, when feeling "proud, successful, or maybe smart." Two general groupings were established for listing and combining the categories as depicted in Table 16. The first grouping contained those responses that represented coping by focusing on the internal dimension of the experience. The second grouping contained those responses that

represented an attempt to deal with or express the feelings in some external manner. Over 45% of the replies emphasized the internal orientation, while almost 50% of the replies described an external response as the way of handling the feeling.

TABLE 16.--Coping With Feelings of Pride/Success

Categories	Frequencies
By internal operations	
Experience the feelings	18
Self-observe; control bragging	12
Total	30
By external expressions	
Share the feelings	11
Manifest--in action/demeanor	10
Display/convey accomplishment	10
Total	31
Miscellaneous	5
Total responses	63

In the interviews, many of the boys expressed a concern that is not apparent from the data. That concern had to do with being too boastful, that is, "bragging" beyond "acceptable" limits. Almost 35% of the replies reflected this concern and consideration. There was an important distinction, however, between the subjects. The first type of replies reflected concern about restraint, with maintaining careful self-vigilance. The second group of replies did not convey such a

degree of self-prohibition and self-concern. These subjects could be expected to be more spontaneous in expressing their self-delight, even selectively bragging about their successes, while maintaining self-awareness and reasonable restraints on such manifestations.

With this more pleasant set of feelings, then, the subjects were likely to try to savor and prolong the experience, and they showed individual variation in experiencing the reaction either internally or externally. Some subjects monitored the expression of their proud feelings and propensity to "brag."

While Question 15 was attempting to learn more about how this age subject perceived and attempted to regulate a specific emotional state, the question was more neutral than the previous two in that it referred to those times when one is "feeling very intense, that is, keyed up, a bit hyper, or excited." Because the boys added qualifying statements when answering the question, it was decided to organize and analyze the data as presented in Table 17. This data can be summarized as follows: Over 45% of the boys offered either a singular, or basically similar set of strategies as their response to this question (e.g., ". . . take it easy . . . lie down . . . watch TV"). Eight boys (almost 30%) offered a combination response, that is, one that included both an active and passive reaction and/or that dealt with both the internal and external situation. Art's reply exemplified such a response, ". . . listen to music . . . go out and exert some energy . . . talk to myself about concentrating more. . . ." Some of the boys made situational differentiations, while four boys offered both situational differentiations, (e.g., "if I were at school . . . if I

were at home") and combinations of replies (e.g., "I might talk to myself . . . might go out and run around"). Twelve boys (almost 45%) offered a "combination" reply to this question rather than just a singular or essentially similar type of response. Four boys indicated that they were unable ("can't") to calm themselves. Two of these four boys seemed more bothered by this condition than did the other two. The one boy recognized that he experienced this state when he got "mad or hyper." If he was inside, he would end up (set it up ?) with his mother hitting him. If outside he "just ran all over the place." Mike, a boy who had been under the care of a neurologist, seemed more pathetic. He immediately and matter-of-factly replied that he "can't" ("calm or steady") himself. He tried to regain equilibrium by hitting his head, either against a wall or a pillow.

Two boys had novel replies to this question. A strategy of one of the boys was to walk to a nearby train station and to sit and watch the trains go by. Another boy reported that he resorted to outbursts of swearing, and added with pride, that he knew more swears than his father.

The data was also examined by establishing the four groupings displayed at the bottom of Table 17. When grouped in that manner, over 40% of the replies involved a "less active behavioral response," 30% of the replies "focused on the internal state," and 20% of the replies described some overt action and activity.

This data can also be studied by examining the categories most frequently mentioned. The four that predominated (two-thirds of the replies) revealed that these boys were likely to respond to their

TABLE 17.--Self-Calming: Overall Strategies and Approaches

	Frequencies[a]
Strategies	
Similar strategies[b]	13
Combinations of strategies	8
Differentiation based on situation	2
Differentiation of situation and use of combinations	4
Unable to self-calm	4
Total	31
Approaches	
By external action/activity	11
By less active behavioral responses (e.g., lying down, listen to music, talking to another)	23
By focusing on the internal state (self-dialogue, refocusing of thoughts)	16
Unable to self-calm	4
Total	54

[a]These frequencies represent number of subjects.

[b]For example, an external action or an internal operation

tension, and desire to diminish it, by engaging in some action or activity, by using some media (music, TV, the printed word) as a way to relax, by trying to self-distract from or suppress the experience, and/or by sitting or lying down.

In summary, these early adolescent subjects, when trying to reduce tension and to calm themselves, employed single strategies or combinations of strategies. Engaging in an activity (discharge), shifting to a more soothing behavior (often using a media) or attempting to suppress the experience were likely responses. A preponderance of their reactions involved overt, but modified, behavioral responses.

The subjects' responses to Question 16 (Table 18) had a different tone and quality to them than did their responses to some of the previous questions. They seemed more matter-of-fact and less enthusiastic than in their previous replies. There are several possible explanations. This was the last question in a taxing assignment. It may have been experienced as too similar to previous questions. The question might have been confusing by adding, ". . . perhaps really worried." A few boys seemed to resist acknowledging having had such affective experiences and two boys denied ever feeling that way. This was the only question in which some of the respondents claimed to have not experienced the affect being considered. Some of the boys offered examples and indicated that there was a regular, high level of stress and pressure in their lives which they regard as typical, "the way it always is." Some of the subjects offered qualifications having to do with the affective state (". . . if I was worried [versus] if I was feeling pressure"), or the issue (". . . if it is a <u>big</u> deal [versus]

not all that major a thing"). Five boys offered two or more strategies for trying to cope. For example, one subject stated, "I would have a talk with myself, try to figure out what to do, then go and watch TV a while." Three other boys responded by offering a qualification and then providing two or more strategies for coping. The data can also be studied in terms of whether the responses involved interaction with another or whether the subjects handled the internal experience by themselves. Over 25% of the replies represented attempts to involve another, while over 45% of the replies portrayed trying to deal with the situation by one's self. Two replies, "Not parents!" and "Do something relaxing," were not included in either grouping, because it could not be determined if others were involved. Of these subjects who did turn to others, the "other" was most likely to be a family member in almost 45% of the instances and a parent in about one-third of the instances.

TABLE 18.--Coping With Stress/Pressure/Worry

Responses	Frequencies
Turn to parent or relative	7
Turn to, talk to friend	5
"Not parents!"	2
Handle it alone, ride it out	10
Try to forget/dismiss	4
Use reason/reevaluate	3
Do something relaxing	8
Never had the experience	2
Miscellaneous	4
Total responses	45

These early adolescents displayed a variety and diversity of responses in trying to cope with stress, pressure, or worry. They were more likely to try to cope with the experience themselves than to engage another. When they did turn to another, it was most likely to be a parent or family member.

The replies of 3 boys were atypical from the responses of the other 24 subjects. Jack, a boy who stood out throughout this study, seemed puzzled by the question. He went on to add that he tended to "get into fights--bad ones" at such times and then "turns to (retreats into) himself--remaining worried--afraid of the other person, that the person is mad at you." Edward was quite intense and spontaneous as he stated, ". . . I crack! . . . I lose it . . . usually lose control . . . break-down and then I just mellow out eventually." Another boy, who otherwise did not stand out, stated that he ". . . hides, you know like a dog. . . ." He later revealed that he was talking about his reaction to the bitter marital discord going on between his parents.

This series of questions, 13 through 16, produced other information not immediately apparent from the tables. First, the experience demonstrated that this age boy was quite capable of, and had a good facility for being aware of and able to report on evoked feeling states. Second, the spontaneity and facility that the subjects demonstrated in discussing these specific affective states and the differentiated ways of coping with them that they reported, demonstrated their level of psychosocial functioning and sophistication. When the more unpleasant, negative, affective states were involved, the boys seldom attempted to more directly involve others. If the replies to

Questions 13 through 16 are analyzed in terms of responses that involved another in the coping effort, then slightly more than 20% of the responses included another as a way of handling the affect. If the responses to Question 14 involving the more pleasant, although somewhat conflictual, affect of pride are eliminated from this total, then about 13% of the responses involved including another as a way of dealing with the affect.

Responses to Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

The subjects responded with the same thoughtfulness and genuineness that characterized their reactions throughout this study. The responses for each question were tabulated and scored using Rosenberg's six scales and scoring system. A subject could obtain a score from six (representing positive self-regard) to zero. The average score for the group was 4.2. The responses to the RSE were also studied in terms of low self-esteem responses and strongly asserted responses (SA/SD)[1] that represented positive self-regard. The following findings emerged from this approach: About 25% of the total replies of the subjects were responses identified as "low self-esteem responses" (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 291). The replies of only two boys did not include responses considered to represent low self-esteem. Over 60% of the subjects that ranked in the bottom third of the RSE believed that both parents perceived them negatively. On the average, there were twice as many (3.4) low self-esteem responses per subject in the group who believed that one or both parents perceived them in negative terms than

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[1]"Strongly agree/strongly disagree" (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 290).

there were among the subjects who believed that one or both parents perceived them positively. When the clinic group was compared to the non-clinic groups (middle school and church youth groups), the clinic subjects averaged 3.12 low self-esteem scores per subject compared to 2.25 for the non-clinic subjects. The contrast between the clinic group and the non-clinic group was not as large (a difference in averages of .43) when studying statements that represented "strong assertions" (SA/SD) reflecting positive self-regard.

Between 60 to 65% of the subjects gave responses indicative of low self-esteem to each of the three following questions:

2. At times I think I am no good at all.

6. I certainly feel useless at times.

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

The two items that evoked the most strongly assertive responses ("strongly agree; strongly disagree") were Questions 3 and 9 below (almost 55% and 75% of the responses).

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities. (SA)

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. (SD)

In summary, these findings from the Rosenberg Scale are congruent with other findings of the study and previous research (e.g., see King, 1973). About one-fourth of the total responses of the subjects contained replies identified as "low self-esteem responses." It was previously reported that when subjects were asked how they thought their parents perceived them, 30% of their responses referred to negative characteristics. While most of the subjects regarded themselves in predominantly positive ways most of the time, there were

parts of themselves and/or times when their self-perception and resulting self-esteem were low(er). The responses to the RSE revealed that it is not uncommon for these subjects to feel no good, useless and/or lack of self-respect. On the other hand, they firmly believed that they have a number of good qualities and were not inclined to think of themselves as failures. The responses to the RSE offered additional illustrations of the relationship between projected parental perceptions and levels of self-regard/self-esteem. For example, it was noted that there were twice as many low self-esteem responses per subject in the group who believed that one or both parents perceived them in negative terms than there were among the subjects who believed that their parents perceived them positively.

Some Case Examples

Throughout this work, the goal has been to fulfill the basic purposes of the study while capturing, preserving, and conveying the uniqueness and humanness of the subjects, the depth and richness of their communications, and the dynamic, interactive process. Looking at some individual cases could provide a more wholistic sense of this unique research process and of the early adolescent subjects who participated in it. With this goal, two groups of boys who were at the opposite ends of a continuum, were selected and presented. This continuum depicted varying degrees of good self-regard/self-esteem. On the one end were those boys who seemed to be feeling good about themselves and their significant others. At the opposite end of that continuum were those boys who, throughout the study, demonstrated and talked about poor self-regard, poor and/or conflicted relationships with

significant others, and who consistently conveyed their troubles and troubledness.

The following four boys were selected because they manifested good self-regard/self-esteem and good relationships with significant others, and were deriving significant satisfaction from their interpersonal relationships with adults and peers. Their scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale supported those observations.

Case One: Thirteen-year-old Jim approached the meetings in a comfortable, friendly, socially appropriate manner. His dress and hair style suggested that attention had been given to his appearance. The notes from the interview described Jim as ". . . thoughtful . . . introspective . . . well-rounded." He easily and spontaneously selected both his adult and peer choices of significant others. His most significant adults were relatives--mother, father, and paternal grandmother. He described his significant adults in positive, friendly terms (e.g., "generous . . . caring"). Jim was equally spontaneous and matter-of-fact in talking about their negative traits (e.g., annoying, hurtful qualities). He made a similar comfortable, balanced appraisal of significant peers. Similarly, he believed that his mother and father would describe him in both complimentary and less than complimentary terms (". . . loud . . . handy"). He was one of the boys, however, who said he "usually couldn't" calm himself when he felt intense. He also acknowledged, via his Rosenberg responses, that at times he thought of himself as "no good . . . and useless."

Case Two: Rick, age 12, lived with his natural parents. In his initial relating, he was friendly, seemed comfortable, but noticeably

reserved. He selected mother, father, and maternal grandmother as his significant adults. He described his parents, especially his mother, in predominantly positive terms (e.g., "generous . . . kind"), but had no problem in also identifying their other less-appreciated qualities. He was also quite proud of his mother, a woman who had achieved high occupational prominence. Similarly, his easily identified, significant peers were described predominantly in terms of affection and regard (e.g., "neat . . . interesting") but he gave a comfortable, balanced appraisal of them as he had done with adults. His ideas about how his parents would describe him paralleled his descriptions of them, that is, predominantly positive but balanced with both negative and positive aspects. Some of his replies suggested that his parents recognized and accepted his differences ("weirdness"); that there was some tension between himself and his father related to his father's tendency to be "belittling . . . embarrassing . . . to yell" at him. He considered turning to a beloved friend when feeling undue stress or worry. At times he "thinks he is no good . . . feels useless," and wished he had more self-respect.

Case Three: Mark, 12 years old, resided with his natural parents. He related easily, and his appropriate friendliness was apparent. Some of his dress was mildly unconventional, which he recognized and seemed matter-of-fact about. Mark, even more than other subjects, seemed to enjoy the opportunity to talk about these topics and was most generous in his elaborations. He displayed a high level of self-reflectiveness in his regular references to "the kind of person" that he was. Mark also chose relatives as his most significant adults--

mother, father, and maternal uncle. Mark described his parents and significant peers in very positive, endearing ways (e.g., ". . . loving . . . caring . . . courteous . . . smart"). Yet he had no hesitancy in identifying the things about his parents that he disliked, that angered, hurt, and upset him. Similarly, he believed that his parents would describe him in endearing ways (e.g., "looks like a million dollars . . . talented . . . smart . . . friendly"). This boy regarded himself as very beloved by his parents. He liked it when mother and father would tell him, "you're special . . . I like you just the way you are." He expressed control of, and confidence in his ability to deal with various affective states. It was no surprise that he would turn to either parent when he felt undue pressure or worry. Nevertheless, he revealed on the Rosenberg that at times he thought of himself as ". . . no good, unable to do as well as most other people . . ." and wished he had more self-respect.

Case Four: Donald, age 13, lived with his natural parents whom he chose, along with one of his teachers, as his significant adults. One of his significant peers was a girl. His descriptions of his parents were positive but less overtly affectionate than were the descriptions of some of the other subjects' (e.g., "interesting . . . smart . . . seldom mean . . . fun"). He offered a comfortable, varied, and balanced reply in regard to all his significant others, both adults and peers. He believed that his parents would describe him in very positive terms (e.g., "smart . . . creative . . . fun . . . easy to talk to"). In fact, he believed that they would describe him in more positive terms than he described them. As he thought about coping with

various affective states, he made differentiations based on specific states and circumstances. He would likely turn to a friend when "stressed out." On the Rosenberg, he revealed that at times he felt useless.

The following three boys stood out as atypical from the rest of the subjects in their troubledness, poor self-regard, and conflicted relationships with significant others.

Case One: Jack, throughout this experience, presented himself in ways that were atypical from the other subjects, including the way that he came to the initial meeting. He burst into the office, and announced his presence. Slightly over 12 years old at the time, this pudgy, somewhat unkempt boy seemed most delighted at the opportunity to talk, perhaps to have someone's undivided attention. Despite his bombastic entry and eager engagement, he seemed cautious, perhaps fearful. In the second meeting, however, he was noticeably more subdued and depressed. He acknowledged a "bad mood" and connected it with a fight with his parents the night before that had cut short his sleep. By the third meeting he had transversed from the enthusiastic kid of the first meeting to an angry, reluctant participant.

Jack's natural father had been killed in an industrial accident when Jack was quite young. He lived with his mother and stepfather and was in constant conflict with them and angry toward them. In describing his mother, Jack did have some nice things to say about her and reported some things about her that he liked. What troubled Jack the most about her was her "letting me down, never building me up, and getting mad at me so often." He never had the relationship with his step-father that

he had with his mother. Whatever relationship that he had before (he describes his step-father as "softer" years ago), had deteriorated. He described his step-father as strict, prone to yelling, and punitive. As might be expected, if he were his own parent he would not hit and would be less strict; these responses evoked anger and depression in him. Despite several attempts, he was unable to offer much in terms of how he thought either parent would describe him. With his mother, "It would depend on her mood." Unlike any of the other boys in the study, Jack listed three girls as his most significant peers. His descriptions of his two selections sounded a bit too ideal, all virtuous with no faults and more like the description of the "perfect mother." His response was immediate and clear as to what he would do if he were a parent to someone like himself in order to enhance good self-feelings. When asked to further define, ". . . show love . . . show caring . . ." he went on to describe a variety of things that the parents could have done with him, places that they could have taken him, that he would have experienced as expressions of love and caring. It was apparent that Jack had real difficulties in regulating affective states. For example, he was easily and often aroused to intense anger, and seemed prone to directly discharge it, often at his mother. He gave little consideration to any other ways of handling anger and believed that he could not contain it anyway. Likewise, with his more general "intensity," he perceived himself to be at the mercy of his own feelings, without any self-resources, at times needing to set up a situation where another hit him in order for him to calm down. When his affective states were not as out of control (e.g., when feeling good,

nervous, worried), he believed that he had to keep to himself and "avoid trouble." Even though Jack was quite verbal, he displayed little real introspection. On his Rosenberg test, he sadly and somewhat reluctantly acknowledged that at times he thinks he "is no good . . . does not possess enough good qualities, feels useless," wishes that he could have more self-respect, and tended to feel that he was a failure.

Case Two: Jeremy's troubledness seemed evident upon first contract. This thirteen-year-old had a very sad, depressed appearance and his self-presentation seemed to convey apology for being (there). He had an eagerness and neediness in his approach, as though he saw this as an opportunity to unburden, as a time to be attended to. Jeremy was living with a step-father with whom he had not "blended." In fact, he was distant from his entire family and felt like an "outsider." This seemed congruent with his selection of significant others. He chose three uncles, all of whom lived a distance away. For his significant peers, he chose three relatives whom he also saw infrequently. His typical descriptors of these three men were impersonal (e.g., "holds many jobs . . . likes the outdoors") and his interaction limited. When it did occur, the exchanges were characterized by provocativeness and bantering with hostile undertones. There was a pathetic quality about Jeremy as he answered questions about how he would treat himself if he were his parent and if he were his own good friend. He would not be so punitive, would not make such a big deal over things, try to be more understanding, and not show favoritism toward younger sibs. He would attend to this "guy," do things with him, stay loyal to him. Anger and sadness permeated his words as he stated that he believed both parents

would describe him in very negative terms. Nor surprising, he tried to cope with his various affective states by keeping to himself. In his responses to the questions on the Rosenberg Scale, he indicated he was dissatisfied with himself, believed that he could not do things as well as others, wished that he had more self-respect, and that he could take a more positive attitude toward himself. He eagerly entered the first meeting, but by the third, it took follow-up and benevolent urging to get him to come in to complete the project. His depression, anger, and resistance were much more evident. (At the completion of the contact, his plight and pain were recognized and discussed with him, and he was informed about possible available help and offered support in approaching his parents.)

Case Three: Edward (13.5) lived with a step-father toward whom he expressed much rage and distain. While not as bitter toward his mother, he saw little to commend her and was critical of her touchiness and her capitulating to his step-father. His significant peer relationships were more like the rest of the group. His replies to Questions 7 through 10 could have served as a good summary of him: He would provide reasonable limits and advice, but would not yell. He would treat this person "as you want others to treat you--with respect and kindly." He believed that both parents would have described him in negative, derogatory ways. In response to the Rosenberg test, he acknowledged that at times he thought of himself as "no good . . . useless . . . lacking in self-respect." He was one of the boys who admitted that he could not (would not?) control his hurt and enraged feelings and lost control under pressure. In these meetings, he

displayed easily aroused anger and frustration in regard to the questions and in his responses.

Summary: Comments on the Cases

These seven boys represented 25% of the subjects and the opposite ends of a continuum that depicted levels of self-regard/self-esteem. The first four boys, manifesting good self-regard and good relationships with significant others, were more similar, shared more commonalities, and were more indistinguishable. In contrast, the last three boys, in the ways they presented themselves and the ways that they manifested their difficulties, were more atypical and unique. Months later they stood out in memory, more differentiated than the first four boys. The boys with good self-regard presented themselves at the interview in an appropriate, friendly manner. Their relating continued to develop; they became more comfortable, friendly, open, and trusting over the three meetings. All of these 12 to 13 year old boys were residing with their natural parents and there was no reference to conflict between the parents. Their descriptions of the parents and their imagined parental descriptions of them reflected positive regard; they were complimentary, friendly, and respectful. Of the 12 total adults selected as significant others, all included mother and father, and 11 of the 12 selections were relatives. Several qualities were evident in their discussion about their important relationships with adults and peers. They talked freely, they could readily introspect, and they seemed to know their own minds. They as easily discussed negative traits of these significant others as they did the positive attributes and seemed comfortable with ambivalence. Their relationships

with their significant peers were predominantly positive, stable, and ongoing. Their descriptions of their peers made equal reference to superficial qualities and qualities of relationships. They put special emphasis on friends being kindly, non-depreciating, and supportive in regard to a variety of situations. While their peer relationships were important, they did not seem to predominate or overshadow their relationships with parents and family. All but one of the boys selected at least two negative statements from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Test in describing aspects of their self-regard. That suggested that all of them knew something about self-dissatisfaction and diminished self-esteem. They also knew about, and had been solidly grounded in good relationships, had benefited from them, regarded them as given but indispensable parts of their lives, and could think of them as sources of nurturance and support.

The three boys on the opposite end of the continuum, with low self-regard and conflictual relationships with significant others, were in marked contrast from the first group and from most of the subjects of the study. In their initial self-presentations and ways of relating, they stood out as atypical; both their neediness and distress were readily apparent. Within the course of the three meetings, their relating had deteriorated. All three boys were living with step-fathers with whom they had poor and conflictual relationships. Unlike the majority of the subjects, they had chronically conflictual relationships with their mothers. Their perceptions of significant others, and the ways that they believed that they were perceived by significant others, were characterized by negative descriptors and

negative feelings. Expressions of positive feelings were limited and qualified. The peer relationships of two of the three boys were also markedly atypical from the rest of the subjects. Their descriptions of how they handled emotions suggested problems in self-control and self-regulation, although they did not necessarily identify their responses as problematic. Their abundant negative responses to the Rosenberg Test reaffirmed their diminished self-regard/self-esteem.

The profiles presented here illustrate some of the findings of Ra (1983) and Offer at al. (1981). Ra found that there was virtually no difference in the themes elicited by the "normal" group as contrasted with the atypical (reformatory) group. Both groups, for example, were concerned about relationships with family and friends. But while the attitudes of the first group were positive and optimistic, the attitudes of the atypical group were characterized by wild hurt feelings, unhappiness, and pessimism (pp. 868-72). Offer et al. (1981) found that, unlike the more normal adolescents, the most troubled subjects showed more self-doubt, unhappiness, defiancy, pessimism and negative attitudes toward family relationships (pp. 116-17).

These case vignettes are intended to convey a wholistic sense of these early adolescent subjects and the contrast between those boys who displayed high levels of "self-vitality, vigor [and] functional harmony" and the boys who portrayed "chronic lowered self-states, instability, vulnerability and lack of sufficient . . . self-autonomy" (Kohut & Wolf, 1978, p. 414). The vignettes also illustrate "some of the specific features of the atmosphere in which the child grows up that account for

[some of the inner] conflicts" (Kohut, 1977, p. 187) and that tend to foster or disrupt the ongoing lifelong process of self-development.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter the results of the study will be further examined, discussed, compared to, and integrated with previous research. Since this was an exploratory study, the objective was to examine the findings in terms of the answers that they provided to the basic questions of the study. The chapter begins by discussing (a) some general factors and findings related to significant others and their influence. The main purposes of the study will then be addressed by discussing the following: (b) who the subjects selected as their significant others, adults and peers; (c) what it was about these significant persons that influenced the self-regard/self-esteem of the subjects; (d) how the adolescent boys identified and attempted to regulate emotions aroused in these interpersonal relationships. After summarizing this discussion, the chapter will conclude by integrating these ideas into a previous framework presented in the Review of Literature, and expanding upon that framework.

General Factors and Findings Related to Significance

The following findings evolved from the study and were an important part of the overall responses of the subjects.

(a) These early adolescent boys formulated their responses of significant others predominantly in terms of qualities of relationships. Studies had reported that early adolescents, unlike younger children, were likely to describe self or others in these terms. (See Bandura, 1977; Burns, 1979; Harter, 1983; L'Ecuyer, 1981; Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Montemayor & Eisen, 1977; Petersen, 1981; Rosenberg, 1979; and Selman, 1980.) This heavy emphasis on "qualities of relationships" may be one reason why the early adolescents show the degree of sensitivity, vulnerability, and instability in interpersonal relationships, characteristic of this stage of development. The subjects, however, described and talked about adult and peer others with the same facility, different from the observations of Livesley and Bromley (1983) who reported that children found it easier to describe other children than to describe adults (p. 185).

(b) These subjects demonstrated that when considering the impact of significant others on the developing self, it is as important to consider those characteristics and behaviors that significant others refrain from enacting, as it is to consider the characteristics and behaviors that are directly enhancing and nurturing to the self.[1] In this study, there was data to suggest that the sense of self-safety may be the most important aspect of the boys' relationships with peer significant others.

The preponderance of previous research identified variables that contributed to the development and enhancement of good self-regard/self-esteem. Harter (1983, pp. 337-39) and Burns (1979, pp. 203-11)

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[1]Those specific behaviors are discussed in (e) below.

identified and summarized the few findings related to variables that diminished self-regard/self-esteem. Burns (1979), for example, had reported that children (also) perceived their significant others as persons who are able to promote or diminish security (p. 161). Kohut (1971, 1973, 1977, 1984) and Kohut and Wolf (1978) placed heavy emphasis on the variables that they had identified as contributing to the development of problems in the area of self-regard/self-esteem, "the destruction of one's human self because of the unavailability of psychological oxygen" (Kohut, 1984, p. 18). The ready responses, the intensity of the affect, the extensive data provided by these early adolescent subjects supported the findings of these theorists and provided stage-specific descriptions of behaviors of significant others that were disruptive and/or hurtful to the self. The data also furnished stage-specific information about some of the "forms of parental behavior that [determines] whether the behavior will create a traumatic or wholesome atmosphere with regard to the development of the child" (Kohut, 1984, p. 15). These specific behaviors will be discussed in ensuring parts of this chapter.

(c) This data confirmed that in order for any of the attributes and behaviors of adult significant others to be enhancing to the self of the boy, those responses must be congruent with his needs and wishes. Compliments, for example, were much sought but in relationship to specific characteristics and/or behaviors that were valued by the boy (e.g., school achievement). That finding replicated the findings of Rosenberg (1979): "One cannot appreciate the significance of a specific component . . . if one fails to recognize the importance or centrality

of that component to the individual . . . it depends on how important . . . [that] quality was to the individual" (p. 73).

(d) Of those characteristics and behaviors that were identified by the subjects as important to them, some were more important to the self than were others. In this study providing compliments, offering assistance, and controlling the expression of anger were three such highly valued attributes and behaviors of significant others. Rosenberg's (1979) finding could be modified and restated as follows: "Not all [behaviors of] significant others are equally significant" (pp. 83-84).

(e) In order to accurately talk about how these early adolescent subjects perceived significant others, one would need to know who was the significant other and what was the self-issue or self-need of the subject. This finding replicates one of Rosenberg's (1979) previous findings (pp. 83-84). In this study different significant others were perceived and related to in different and distinguishable ways. That distinction was apparent between male/female, mother/father, and adult/peers, but not evident when contrasting choices of peer significant others. These issues will be further discussed in the ensuing sections.

(f) Different significant others, however, also were perceived by these subjects as having some similar attributes and interpersonal behaviors that contributed to, as well as threatened or diminished, self-regard/self-esteem. These important others provided compliments and recognitions, offered support and assistance, and contributed to mutual participation and involvement. They threatened and disrupted the

self and/or contributed to diminished self-esteem in the ways that they expressed anger and when they belittled, demeaned or depreciated the boy. These findings suggested that there are some basic attributes and behaviors of all significant others that contribute to their special psychological status. This finding corroborates the findings of other researchers (e.g., Bednar et al., 1989; Greenberg et al., 1983; Kohut, 1971, 1977, 1984; L'Ecuyer, 1981; and Rosenberg, 1979) who postulated basic self-needs and the "quality of attachment to significant others as important variables throughout the lifespan" (Greenberg et al., 1983, p. 373). These findings are in accord with certain theories of development which have identified basic, life-long psychosocial needs of the self (see Erikson, 1959; Lerner, 1976, p. 192).

These issues generate some intriguing questions for future study. For example, would a study that included a larger, more heterogeneous group of early adolescents discover some similar basic, common self-needs that tend to be enhanced or diminished by certain behaviors of self-designated significant others? In studying subjects from other cultures and other socioeconomic backgrounds, who would be identified as the significant others, and what would be the quality and diversity of those attachments? Would a longitudinal study identify basic self-needs and illustrate how they are expressed at different stages of psychosocial development? At different psychosocial stages, do people put more emphasis on certain qualities and behaviors of significant others; have they developed various coping strategies and defenses for protecting self-regard/self-esteem? Bednar et al. (1989), for example, believed that self-esteem is "neither fixed in youth nor

uniformly influenced by the same factors across the lifespan" (pp. 12-14). Rosenberg (1979) stated that "there is evidence to indicate that contrasting groups (old and young, rich and poor, boys and girls), do see themselves differing with regard to certain specific [self] components" (p. 280).

The Significant Others

Adults

As reported in the Results section, the boys chose their mothers, fathers, and relatives in general (over 80% of the choices) as their adult significant others. These results were similar to the findings of other researchers (see Burns, 1979; Felson & Zielinski, 1989; Galbo, 1983; Greenberg et al., 1983; Harter, 1983; Reid et al., 1989; and Rosenberg, 1979) who found that, "Parents were almost always listed as significant others by [early] adolescents . . . three-fourths of the respondents listed at least one extended family member" (Blyth et al., 1982, pp. 444-46). Of the subjects, 70% chose their mother as their first choice while 70% of the second choices were fathers. As Rosenberg (1979) reported, "Whatever the child's sex, race, age, or socioeconomic status, the mother is most likely to be ranked as highly significant, followed by father" (p. 96). Unlike the findings of Galbo (1983), the same sex parent was not the predominant first choice as adult significant other.

These early adolescents perceived and described their parents in predominantly pleasant, positive terms. The majority of the early adolescent subjects believed that their parents also perceived them in predominantly neutral or positive ways. Over 60% of the boys seemed to

have had a relatively good relationship with both parents; no conflict with either parent was evident. Seven boys expressed marked ambivalence toward one or both parents, and six boys reported regular conflict with one or both parents. The positive findings of King (1979) and Offer et al. (1981, 1988) were upheld here; the majority of these boys seemed to have had good relationships with their parents.

Adult significant other Choice One (most often mother) was more often described in "doing" (interacting) modes than was Choice Two (more often father), who was described with more ambivalence and negative qualities. Choice One was also perceived as doing more things that subjects liked while Choice Two was described as doing more things that subjects disliked.

While the subjects believed that their adult significant others perceived substantial parts of them in neutral or positive fashion, they also believed that their parents perceived other aspects of their selves in negative ways. Some of these believed perceptions (now developing internalizations ?) were harsh and over-generalized. This outcome was replicated on the responses to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale where over 25% of the total responses of the subjects contained replies identified as "low self-esteem responses." Perhaps this finding is representative of most people who are feeling reasonably good about themselves. That is, they will show a similar degree of positive self-regard in relationship to the more negative self-appraisals. Bednar et al. (1989) maintained that everyone "receives regular amounts of negative feedback from the social environment . . . all of us will have to deal with rejection. . . . It is a catalyst that activates other

psychological processes that influence the development of self-esteem." According to them, overcoming this threat is one of the basic processes involved in personal growth and development (pp. 12, 98-118).

The finding that mothers, fathers, and relatives in general were perceived as adult significant others, has implications in today's society in which family mobility and instability are commonplace. The findings pointed out that the nuclear and extended family are very important to the self-regard/self-esteem of the developing early adolescent. Disruptions of the family (e.g., by divorce) will effect the nuclear and extended support system in which the young adolescent is intertwined and invested, and upon which the developing stability of the self-regard/self-esteem is highly dependent.

Peers

In contrast to their selection of adult significant others, these boys selected male, non-relatives in over 85% of the instances. This result correlated with the findings of some other researchers who had studied this issue (e.g., Blyth et al., 1982) but differed from some of the findings of other researchers (e.g., Rosenberg, 1979) who found that siblings were a more predominant choice.

Because there are few studies that identify peer significant others per se, and delve into the specifics of those important relationships, there were no known studies with which to contrast some of the findings from this study. The subjects' descriptors of peer significant others were similar to their descriptors of adult significant others in that the subjects referred to positive personal/ interpersonal traits and qualities of these others. Their descriptors

of peer significant others differed, in several ways, from those offered for adult significant others. There was not a clear distinction between choices, and their replies referred to physical characteristics and/or admired traits as important elements in their perceptions of peer significant others. With their peers, they emphasized the importance of being included and considered (not being ignored or overlooked) and objected to behaviors of peers that were regarded as "pushy," different from their replies about their adult significant others. Their replies were very similar to the qualities that Galbo (1983) identified as valued qualities of significant others. These persons could be modeled after and/or admired, they reciprocated in terms of interests and likings, and they possessed "human qualities" (pp. 417-27). The findings of Offer et al. (1981) were also replicated here. The majority of these subjects also "enjoyed good relationships with their friends" (p. 116).

Perceptions of Characteristics and Behaviors of Significant Others: Their Influences Upon Self-Regard and Feelings

Adults

Both adult others were attributed significance for the self-enhancing compliments and for the support and assistance of various kinds that they provided and that the subjects sought. The boys expressed varying degrees of upset and dislike at the ways that both significant others, but especially males/fathers, handled anger. They perceived these important adults as being too impatient, too impulsive, and they objected to the methods the adult used to express the anger (e.g., harshness, prolonged ignoring, yelling and screaming). While not

as predominant, the boys expressed a consistent dislike of the teasing, demeaning, belittling, behavior directed at them, by these significant others. The subjects indicated by their replies, that these experiences, when they occurred, were disquieting and upsetting, and experienced as disruptions of self-equanimity. Often they were experienced as direct threats to self-regard/self-esteem and potentially diminishing of both.

There were some perceived qualities of Choice One (i.e., mothers) not associated with Choice Two, that were a part of that person's significance. They were liked best, appreciated for their caring, friendly, thoughtful attitudes, for the ways that they listened and understood, and for the ways that they helped and assisted. The overall relationship to Choice One was generally characterized by more interaction, more overt friendliness and tenderness, and less ambivalence. This outcome is similar to the findings of Reid et al. (1989) who reported that mothers were perceived as reliable, self-enhancing, and affectionate (p. 907). Burns (1979) reported that the early adolescent viewed his mother as more friendly and less threatening than father (p. 163). The boys believed that their mothers perceived them differently from their fathers, that is, more in terms of considerateness, obedience, politeness, and attentiveness. The subjects were often upset and angered by Choice One's being "too restrictive." Some researchers (e.g., Openshaw et al., 1984; Rollins & Thomas, 1979) reported that issues of autonomy and discipline were contributors to self-regard. The boys were likely to feel hurt, and their self-esteem diminished, by Choice One's tendency to accuse, name call, or blame.

A different constellation of qualities and characteristics were associated with Choice Two (i.e., fathers). The boys' self-regard/self-esteem was enhanced, and they clearly delighted in sharing companionship and mutual interests with this important male. They enjoyed his humorous qualities, and their good feelings were heightened when he helped them in a wide variety of ways. Demo et al. (1984) had found that "support and participation have a positive effect on adolescent's self-esteem" (p. 706). On the other hand, these boys strongly objected to, and were upset, angered, and hurt by, the provocative, argumentative behaviors of Choice Two, and the (other?) ways that he handled his anger. None of these dissatisfactions were expressed concerning Choice One.

When asked to tell how they thought that their parents would describe them, the boys attributed 50% more positive descriptors to fathers than to mothers. They believed that their fathers would depict them as "nice, kind, caring." Two things were noteworthy about this believed parental perception. First, it was markedly different from the perceptions attributed to mother. Second, it was similar to the ways that the boys described their Choice One (i.e., mother) and what they liked best about that person. The boys seemed to be saying that they believed their fathers viewed them in even more positive terms than mothers, and that fathers especially valued those characteristics that the boys liked about, and had now incorporated from their mothers.

There are at least two possible explanations for these findings. It is possible that because of the developmental stage and needs of the early adolescent male, the relationship between the boy and his father

have taken on new positive meanings. Perhaps there is a positive, reciprocal interactive effect occurring between the boy and his dad, as observed and reported by other researchers (e.g., Bandura, 1977; Demo et al., 1987; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). It is also possible that Rosenberg's (1979) principal of "selective imputation" is operative here. "Although an individual sees himself through the eyes of others, what he tends to see is a more attractive picture than one that actually is" as a way of protecting and enhancing self-esteem (p. 264). This psychological response of the early adolescent male could serve to protect and enhance his self-regard in relationship to the developmental task of gender identity formation (see Erikson, 1959, p. 118).

This entire set of findings is in accord with other researchers (Burns, 1979; Reid et al., 1989) who reported on the differing influences and subjects' differing perceptions of adult significant others, that is, mothers as compared to fathers. These findings do not concur with Felson (1989) who reported that children have "only vague conceptions of how they are viewed by others" (p. 917). These findings challenge Harter's (1983) view that adolescents tend to construct over-generalized others (p. 315). Perhaps both Felson and Harter are referring to findings like the one reported in (f) above. Subjects do identify <u>some</u> similar (generalized ?) attributes and interpersonal behaviors common to all their significant others, both adults and peers.

A group of research psychologists have contributed findings concerning the perceptions of important others that made them valued by the psychological self of the early adolescent (Demo et al., 1987; Felson & Zielinski, 1989; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Openshaw et al., 1984;

Rollins & Thomas, 1979). These diverse but overlapping findings were consolidated into three broad categories of support, involvement/participation, and autonomy/freedom. Many of the descriptors presented above are specific examples of attributes and behaviors that composed those broad categories. These categories and the data that compose them will be discussed more extensively at the end of this chapter. Gecas and Schwalbe (1986) found that perceptions of paternal behavior were somewhat more consequential for adolescents' self-esteem than were perceptions of maternal behavior (p. 37). This study did not develop the kind of data to confirm or refute that finding. It is clear, however, that in some respects fathers are perceived quite differently and fulfill some different functions from mothers; that they make important contributions to self-regard/self-esteem.

While the subject of identification is beyond the scope of this paper, some of the findings raise issues related to it. Like self-regard/self-esteem, it is an important issue at this stage of development. In previous discussion, it was noted how the early adolescent boy sought out in his peers the best liked qualities of both adult significant others. It was reported above, that in this study the boys credited their fathers with substantially more positive descriptors of them than they did their mothers, and that they believed that the traits that fathers would describe (and presumed liked) about them were the same qualities that the boys liked about their mothers. This information suggests that the process of self-formation and identity-formation are interrelated and may operate by some of the same principles. What is apparent here may also be true in identification

formation: it is a complex process, it requires in-depth study of subjects as one way of knowing more about its components and processes, and that like the formation of self-regard, it selectively makes use of the characteristics and behaviors of various significant others in an idiosyncratic fashion. These findings stimulate ideas about possible topics and areas for future research. The components of identification could be investigated with an approach similar to the one used in this study. Another possible study could examine the interrelationship between self-regard/self-esteem and identification.

Peers

The characteristics and behaviors of peer significant others that contributed to heightened or diminished self-feelings were very similar to some of the qualities associated with adult significant others. Subjects emphasized the importance of positive personality attributes of peer significant others (e.g., is nice . . . funny), important support that they received in the form of varied assistance, recognitions and compliments, and the participation and involvement with peer significant others. Studies, involving parents, had found that support and participation had a positive effect on adolescents' self-esteem (see Openshaw et al., 1984; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). The following characteristics and behaviors of peer significant others had a negative influence on the self and were the same as those associated with adult significant others: the way that important others handled and expressed anger; reactions of peer significant others that were depreciating, belittling, or demeaning.

Subject responses also were different, in some respects, from

any that were given in association with adult significant others. The subjects valued (idealized ?) the physical characteristics and specific (admired) traits of peer significant others. They put much emphasis on the importance of being included and considered--not being ignored or overlooked. They objected to behaviors of peer significant others that they regarded as "pushy"-- with its disturbing influence on both the physical and emotional parts of the self. Some of their descriptors of peer significant others were different from those of adult significant others: they offered fewer but a larger range of descriptors and their two choices were less differentiated than were their adult choices.

While the distinction is one of degree, the subjects did regard their peer significant others more in terms of self-safety and self-validation than they did adults. A review of their replies revealed the following: that this valued other was perceived as generally pleasant and not provocative or combative in relationship with subjects; that a large part of the significance accorded to a peer other was related to the way this valued other demonstrated regard and consideration for the subject and/or avoided doing things that would diminish self-regard. The difference between peer Choice One from Choice Two was that Choice One was accorded (30%) more replies having to do with positive personal/interpersonal traits, while Choice Two received (50%) more complaints related to being depreciating or belittling. These findings can be interpreted as demonstrating Rosenberg's (1979) principles of "selective interaction" and "selective valuation." People tend to like and associate with those who regard them and treat them well. Significance is selective in that others are "chosen in the interest of protecting

self-esteem and maintaining self-consistency" (pp. 261-64). The findings above have helpful implications and applications in assisting an early adolescent who is willing to examine his relationship with peer others and is desirous of improving upon it.

A composite description of peer significant others was a combination of the best-liked characteristics of adult significant others. This finding can also be partially explained based on Rosenberg's principals of selective interaction, imputation, and valuation (pp. 261-64) and on the basis of some basic theories of developmental psychology and learning (see e.g., Hill, 1982). Past experiences will exert an important influence upon the selection and construction of present important relationships.

There are a number of other ways in which this set of findings, concerning peer significant others, connects with previous research. The findings of Reid et al. (1989), that friends are perceived as an important source of companionship support, is illustrated here. Stark et al. (1989) and Ra (1983) had observed that family and peer relationships, competition, achievement, and accomplishment were important areas of concern for the adolescents. Greenberg et al. (1983) documented the importance of adolescents' relationship with peers and its correlation with self-esteem and life-satisfaction (p. 382). The findings of Blyth et al. (1982) were replicated directly in the data and indirectly in the subjects' emphasis. That is, that while generally the early adolescent increases his involvement with peers and they take on increased importance in his life, this is not done at the expense of the importance of parental persons as significant others. Offer (1981) has

also found that while the early adolescent is beginning to be influenced by peers, parents tend to over-emphasize that influence (p. 122).

It is also apparent that the research findings concerning adolescents' peer significant others, and especially the specifics about those persons and interrelationships, are quite limited. These topics require and invite further research study.

Self-Regulation of Emotions

The findings related to how the early adolescent boy attempted to regulate affective experiences replicated the outcomes reported by Carroll and Steward (1984) and Dodge (1989). These early adolescent subjects described feelings as internal, were able to understand multiple feelings, recognized that they could change their feelings and that they had some control over them. They showed "sophisticated regulatory behaviors including response inhibition, delay of gratification, language, and defensive attributions." The subjects displayed judgment about when to "deploy specific regulatory behaviors" and ability to anticipate outcomes of their behavior (p. 341).

The subjects of this study had been asked to describe their ways of coping with four different sets of feeling experiences--hurt/embarrassment/anger, pride/success, excitability ("keyed up . . . a bit hyper"), and stress/pressure/worry. The following observations and conclusions can be made from the subjects' data and from the interview process: These early adolescents were generally quite aware of their internal life, similar to what other researchers had observed and reported (Berg, 1989; Carroll & Steward, 1984; Carver et al., 1989; Dodge, 1989; Lane & Schwartz, 1987; King, 1973; Kopp, 1989; and

Rosenberg, 1979). Franko et al. (1985) had found that self-regulatory strategies of pre-adolescent children were predominantly behavioral, non-verbal, and self-oriented. Developmental transformations occur in the process of self-regulation as reported and described by researchers like Kopp (1989). While these early adolescents were in transition from an earlier developmental stage when their self-regulatory strategies were predominantly behavioral, non-verbal, and self-oriented, their coping strategies still included various types of overt behavioral responses. Band and Weisz (1988) had found that "secondary control coping," aimed at modifying the internal world, tended to increase with age. That transition was apparent in the reported perception of these subjects. These early adolescents vividly demonstrated the dual but interrelated functions of internal and interpersonal self-regulation similar to what Carver et al. (1989) had observed in their subjects. As Band and Weisz (1988) had also observed, the adolescents of this study showed a strong inclination toward coping versus avoiding when dealing with their emotional life. According to Bednar et al. (1989) coping is associated with favorable self-evaluative processes, feelings, and perceptions "because of the high psychological quality of the elements associated with this response" (p. 116).

Subjects used a variety of ways of dealing with emotions and the interpersonal aspects of such emotional states. They spontaneously inserted qualifications when responding, especially when discussing feelings of "excitability" and "stress/worry." Variables such as the situation, the others involved, the feelings evoked, were important considerations in "selecting" the specific coping strategies. This

behavior is an illustration of the "social rules" identified by Hesse and Cicchetti (1982). These internal rules determine how, when, and where the individual expresses or controls his emotions (p. 34). These findings have been replicated by an extensive list of researchers (see, Band & Weisz, 1988; Compas, 1987; Dodge, 1989; Franko et al., 1985; King, 1973; Stark et al., 1989). The responses also varied according to the feelings being experienced. Their predominant response to the more unpleasant feeling states (e.g., hurt/embarrassment/anger) was to avoid the unpleasant experience and extinguish it. King's (1973) findings applied to these subjects; they did tend to turn away from painful feelings to topics and activities often of a physical nature. When the affective experience was more pleasant (e.g., pride/success), their efforts were directed toward savoring the experience, displaying their delight, and/or sharing it with others. Emde (1973) had identified this phenomenon as one of the four functions of affective life--"affective monitoring." The self's efforts at self-regulation are directed toward maximizing pleasure and minimizing unpleasure. Generally, however, subjects tended to conceal affects and handle affective experiences alone as a predominant way of dealing with emotions. Only 13-20% of their replies involved others. This finding may be a manifestation of one of the reported outcomes of Rosenberg (1979). He found that adolescents considered problematic, instances in which they were too obvious in displaying hurt, getting upset, or being short-tempered (p. 231). Stark et al. (1989) reported that adolescents expressed fear of negative evaluation as an important factor in their overt responding (p. 204). This finding may also be gender-specific in that this same

research group reported that males, unlike females, used social support less often in attempting to cope (p. 204). Offer et al. (1981) observed this same gap--between what the adolescent experienced and how the adults perceived him. They offered various explanations for this incongruency, but explained it in terms of "adults creating a 'generation gap' [and] distorting the adolescent experience" (p. 129).

The normal adolescents of this study demonstrated that they regularly experienced unpleasant, distressing emotional states. They were, however, able to cope with them and/or were not chronically overwhelmed by them as King (1973) had also found with the normal adolescents of his study. This finding is also supported by the findings of other researchers (e.g., Offer at al., 1979, 1981; Ra, 1983; Rosenberg, 1979). They also reported that at times adolescents have doubts about themselves, have anxieties, get depressed, etc. Bednar et al. (1989) maintained that, "The essential construction of self-esteem occurs in the process of exercising coping, or conversely, avoiding responses" (p. 35). On the Rosenberg test, subjects' responses (60-65%) indicated that at times they felt no good, useless, and lacking in self-respect. On the same test, a preponderance of responses of the subjects (55-75%) indicated that they "strongly agreed" that they had a number of good qualities and were <u>not</u> inclined to feel that they were a failure. In contrast, Offer et al. (1988) found that in a study of adolescents from the Chicago area about 20% of the subjects did not show such an ability to cope and could be classified as troubled or disturbed (p. 95).

During this part of the study it was observed that the subjects

gave little consideration to the possibility of modifying their handling of various affective reactions. This is an area in which education and intervention could be quite helpful to this age person.

Methodology

The eager and wholehearted participation of the subjects of this study, and the in-depth responses that they produced, illustrated the value, power, and potential usefulness of this methodology. The researcher believes that the three key variables of the methodology were the carefully crafted format, the use of a trained and experienced child psychotherapist as the interviewer, and the series of ongoing meetings with the subjects. The responses of the subjects added support to the position of the researchers previously cited that, "Adolescents, when approached as persons and listened to . . . can and will share a great deal of their subjective feelings" (Offer et al., 1981, pp. 128-29). The abundance and quality of the information provided by the subjects added additional support to the findings and positions of researchers like Damon and Hart (1988), Juhasz (1985), Rosenberg, (1979), and Burns (1979). This study demonstrated that self-reporting of subjects allows for the flexibility required when studying such phenomenon; true scientific control is still maintained by "well-guided flexibility rather than an arbitrary standardization of procedure." Such approaches "provide truer scientific accounts of children's developing understanding than do standardized questionnaires or tests" (Damon & Hart, 1988, pp. 78-79). This study illustrated that one way to diminish researcher bias, provide for an optimum response set, better develop specifics, and enhance meanings, is to have the study conducted by a

trained, experienced interviewer. As Offer et al. (1981) had advised, from their extensive experience, "One's approach should depend on what one is trying to accomplish, and how the relationship is structured will have a big influence on the data derived as well as what one is able to accomplish" (p. 29).

Summary

This chapter attempted to further refine, order, and consolidate the results, to connect these findings with previous research, and to present the findings in a form that facilitated extrapolation and application. The findings from this study were consistent with previous research in the subjects' selection of adult and peer significant others and in the ways that they formulated their perceptions. Both adult and peer others were perceived as having some similar attributes and behaviors that were potentially enhancing or threatening to the boys' selves.

These boys valued and experienced as self-enhancing the following attitude of their adult significant others: thoughtfulness, caring, understanding, and humor. Good self-feelings were generated when adult others communicated in a "reasonable" manner, complimented them, were supportive of them, were helpful and willing to assist, and did things with them.

They disliked, and were often angered or hurt by the way significant others handled anger and when these others were provocative or argumentative. They experienced similar feelings when these adults accused, blamed, labeled, belittled, and criticized;p when significant others were "unfair."

The subjects also perceived their peer significant others in predominantly positive terms and sought peer others who were "pleasant" and not provocative or combative, who were helpful, encouraging, considerate and included subjects in their activities, and who had good control over the expression of their angry feelings. A composite description of peer significant others was a combination of the best-liked characteristics of adult significant others. Self-safety was emphasized more in regard to peer significant others, while the desire for self-nurturing received more emphasis in replies having to do with adult significant others.

Subjects' awareness of their affective lives was significantly more extensive than they revealed to the external world. They took into consideration a variety of factors in formulating coping responses. Their reactions typically involved attempts to deal with both the internal and external world, to employ a combination and/or series of coping responses, and to not involve others in that effort.

The responsiveness of the subjects and the quality of the data supported the position of the group of researchers who had advocated this methodology. The three key variables were the format, experienced interviewer, and series of ongoing meetings.

Integrating This Study with Previous Research

In the Review of the Literature section, the diverse set of findings on characteristics of significance and significant others was consolidated into the following three broad categories: support, involvement/participation, and control/autonomy. This basic framework,

and an expansion of it, will be used for further organizing and integrating the findings of this study.

In this study, "support" also was identified as an important and valued characteristic of adult significant others. Being "complimented" and "helped and assisted" were additional manifestations of "support." The specific ways in which this age subject sought and perceived such interpersonal transactions were discussed.

In this study, "involvement and participation" also were identified as highly valued behaviors of significant others. "Sharing," defined as "companionship and mutual interest" in this study, is a dimension of "involvement/participation."

The subjects also identified "communication skills" (researcher's term) as highly valued characteristics of significant others, that is, other "listens . . . talks with . . . understands." Demo et al. (1987) found that communication was strongly associated with adolescents' self-esteem, but they considered it as another dimension of "support." In this study those descriptors conveyed a different meaning from the descriptors that were characterized under "support." In certain instances, because of what the subjects were sharing (e.g., a difficult, conflictual situation) the perceived understanding of the adult significant other was experienced as "support." At other times the subjects' sense that the adult other was "truly listening and talking with them" was experienced as a reaffirmation of self-worth and perceived as a beloved "personal attribute" of the significant other. No doubt "communication" is a necessary and important component in the interaction between early adolescents and their significant others. But

before it can be categorized, it is necessary to know more about the specific communication, and what it represents to the subjects. The speculation of Demo et al. (1987) that support is a multidimensional construct (p. 713) is suggested by the data of this study.

The subjects, in response to several questions, also made references to issues related to "autonomy/control." These issues emerged when subjects were asked about their dislikes, the things about significant others that evoked anger, the things that they would refrain from doing as "good parents" to minimize feelings of upset, hurt, or anger. Whether these issues resulted in disturbances to self-regard/ self-esteem depended on how the adult handled two other variables: their anger, and their tendency to affront the boys' self-regard. Issues having to do with autonomy/control, per se, did not receive major emphasis in the responses of the subjects of this study. The way that the questions of the study were directed may be one explanation for this outcome. Demo et al. (1987), in reviewing studies from 1974 to 1987, also found that data concerning parental control was inconsistent and they offered various explanations for this (pp. 706-13).

In order to adequately represent other findings that evolved from this study, it is necessary to expand the basic framework by adding two additional categories. The subjects identified a cluster of important personal attributes of adult significant others that did not fit into any of the three broad categories of the basic framework. (These attributes were more often associated with mother than father.) The fourth, and additional category is "(other) personality attributes that enhance self-regard." This category includes the "human qualities"

that Galbo (1983) identified as valued characteristics of adult significant others. These valued qualities of the other are believed to enhance the early adolescent's self in two ways. First, they provide parts of a beloved adult other to idealize and to model. (Recall, that when the subjects were asked to report on how they thought their fathers would describe them, they presented a set of descriptors that were very similar to the descriptors that they had used to describe positive qualities of their mother.) Second, these valued qualities contribute to positive self-regard. Such qualities of the other as "thoughtful/ caring," when routinely communicated to the self, are ascribed meanings (e.g., "I am a valued, worthwhile, cared-about person"); they contribute to a developing positive self-perception/self-regard and become enduring internalizations. These latter findings are in accord with the positions of Kohut and Wolf (1978) and Bednar et al. (1989) who believed that the child's self was more influenced by what the parents are than what the parents do (p. 274). They are manifestations of the functions of significant others that Kohut saw as vital for healthy self-development, that is, affirming, admiring, and serving as a source for idealization (Kohut, 1984, p. 52).

It was established that what significant others refrained from doing that would be disruptive or hurtful to the developing self is also very important to the development of healthy self-regard/self esteem. A fifth category is added to include such responses: attributes that threaten or diminish self-regard. The subjects repetitively reported that they had trouble dealing with the ways that significant others handled their anger, with behaviors of these persons that were

experienced as hostile or provocative, belittling, depreciating, or overly critical.

Summary

These five categories, three derived from previous research and two added from this study, can be effectively used to organize the data of this study related to adult significant others. They represent "characteristics and behaviors of adult significant others that influence self-regard/self-esteem": (a) support, (b) involvement/participation, (c) autonomy/freedom, (d) personal attributes that enhance self-regard, and (d) attributes that threaten/diminish self-regard. Two qualifications need to be inserted, however. First, these categories differed in terms of the emphasis that they were given by the subjects. The broad category of "support," for example, was the most heavily emphasized. Second, even those <u>important</u> things that significant others did or represented were not equally important to the self.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND APPLICATIONS

Self-regard/self-esteem are vital personality components and an integral part of the self that is experienced as having "cohesion . . . vitality, vigor . . . and functional harmony" (Kohut & Wolf, 1978, p. 414). Significant others and self-regulation of emotions, especially those generated in these important interactions with significant others, are two basic variables that contribute to this sense of self. Knowing more about these two important self-dimensions, and how they are manifested at specific developmental stages like early adolescence, provides useful knowledge, for refining understandings of the early adolescent and for facilitating the development of healthy self-regard/ self-esteem.

Purpose

This study had two major goals: to determine what it was about significant others--what they represented, how they behaved and interacted, what functions they fulfilled, as perceived by the adolescent--that accorded them their significance; to consider specific emotional states that were aroused in these interpersonal experiences and to examine the ways in which the boys attempted to regulate these affective reactions.

Approach

The study approach had two important components: the interview format, "On Significant Others," composed of thirty-six carefully crafted, open-ended questions designed to elicit the information germane to the purposes of the study; the use of a trained and experienced child psychotherapist who conducted all of the interviews. The subjects of the study were seen in a series of interviews in order to derive and develop more in-depth information, related to the purposes of the study. The overall approach was designed to provide subjects with maximum opportunity to derive their responses from their own introspections and in their own unique ways. The interview format, a structured approach within broad parameters, insured that the basic issues of the investigation would be addressed and that consistency and replication would be possible from subject to subject.

Subjects

The 27 early adolescent male subjects were selected from three sources, a clinical practice group, a junior high middle school, and a church youth group. All of the subjects were Caucasian and resided in the suburbs of a large midwestern metropolitan area. Twenty-two boys (over 80%) lived with their natural parents. The subjects ranged in age from 12 to 15.5 with 13 boys (48%) being 13 years old. The boys were in grades six through nine with 20 boys (74%) in either grade seven or eight. All were attending junior or senior high schools that had excellent educational reputations.

Procedure

The three groups were seen at the sites from which they had been referred. Careful attention was given to establishing an interview space at each location that was private and regularly available. The selected subjects were seen on a weekly basis for approximately forty-five minutes.

The interviewer had several important functions to perform. He had to develop initial trust and a working alliance with subjects and to be aware of and to manage his part in the process in order to facilitate spontaneous self-disclosure. He had to listen carefully and exercise clinical judgment in deciding when and how to request elaboration. The interviewer needed to accurately record subjects' responses and to note and record any additional observations that added meaning to the exchange.

Method of Organizing and Analyzing the Data

The Data Collection Section was constructed to facilitate compiling of the subjects' responses to each question. Part of the approach of this exploratory study was to let the "definition and isolation of key variables" (Livesley & Bromley, 1973, p. 71) be the end result of the study. The procedure that was established was intended to facilitate that objective. Each of the questions was systematically studied in the same order as it had been presented to the subjects, and all responses were listed. The data were then examined for the purpose of "creating, testing, revising, simple, practical and effective analysis methods" (Miles & Huberman, 1986, p. 17). The data were then studied for the purpose of establishing logical categorizations. In

this process two important factors were considered: first, the purpose of the original question, and second, the approaches and structures used by other researchers in organizing and analyzing similar kinds of data. Concerted efforts were made to preserve the original responses and to use descriptive phrases that preserved the meaning and conveyed the tone and intent of the responses. The categorized data were studied from multiple perspectives, and the most predominant data and patterns were used in developing conclusions.

Summary and Conclusions

The subjects chose their mothers, fathers, and relatives in general (over 80% of their choices) as their adult significant others. Over 85% of peer significant others selected, were male, non-relatives. These adult and peer significant others contributed to positive self-regard/self-esteem when they provided compliments and recognitions, offered support and assistance, contributed to mutual participation and involvement. They threatened or disrupted the self in the ways that they handled anger and/or when they belittled, demeaned, or depreciated subjects. What significant others refrained from doing and being that would be experienced as upsetting, anger-arousing or hurtful, was as important to the boys' sense of self as those things that they did and represented which were self-enhancing.

Over 60% of the boys had relatively good relationships with both parents and believed that their parents perceived them in predominantly neutral and positive ways. They also believed that their parents perceived other aspects of them in negative ways, and some of these believed perceptions were harsh and over-generalized. Choice One,

primarily mothers, were valued for their caring, friendly, thoughtful attitudes, for the ways that they listened and understood, and for the ways that they helped and assisted. Subjects believed that this significant other perceived them in terms of considerateness, obedience, politeness, attentiveness. These significant others provoked upset and angry feelings when they were perceived as "too restrictive" and engendered hurt with their tendency to accuse, name-call, or blame. Adult Choice Two, primarily fathers, were appreciated for their humorous qualities, but the boys were often disturbed, upset, or hurt by the way Choice Two handled and expressed anger and his tendency to be provocative and argumentative. This important adult was experienced as self-enhancing when he "helped" them (in a wide variety of ways) and when he shared companionship and mutual interests with them. The subjects believed that this significant other perceived them as "nice, kind, caring," similar to the ways that the boys described their Choice One (i.e., mother).

Peer significant others were perceived in terms of physical characteristics and specific admired traits. It was important to subjects that they feel included and considered--not ignored or overlooked; subjects objected to behaviors of peer others that were regarded as "pushy." A composite description of peer significant others was a combination of the best-liked characteristics of adult significant others. Subjects tended to regard their peer others more in terms of self-safety, and self-validation than they did adult others. Choice One was accorded 30% more replies having to do with positive

personal/interpersonal traits, while Choice Two received 50% more complaints related to being depreciating.

In examining their emotions, the subjects were aware, and introspective of their internal life. Their coping strategies were aimed at influencing both the internal and interpersonal world and included various types of overt activities. They recognized important situational variables and interjected qualifiers when discussing ways of coping. Their responses also were related to the feelings being experienced. They tended to respond to unpleasant feelings by avoidance and/or suppression and to more pleasant affective states by attempting to savor the experience and share it. Generally, however, their most predominant way of dealing with emotions was to keep them to themselves and handle the affective experience alone. These adolescents regularly experienced unpleasant, distressing emotional states but were able to cope with them.

The eager and wholehearted participation of the subjects, and the in-depth responses that they produced, provided convincing support for the value, power, and potential usefulness of this methodology.

Applications of Findings

One of the purposes for the particular approach of this study was to derive information that could be easily translated and applied by persons involved with early adolescents. With that purpose in mind these findings were synthesized into the following topics: (a) applications and considerations for persons interacting with early adolescent males, (b) applications and considerations for improving peer relationships, (c) applications of findings to clinical work, and (d) a

series of special issues that evolved from the research process and that merit consideration and/or further study.

Applications and Considerations for Persons Interacting with Early Adolescent Males

This study contains information that easily translates into considerations and guidelines for appraising and refining one's interactions with the early adolescent male. These boys responded positively to, and had good self-feelings about important others who manifested certain traits and behaviors. They felt good about someone who was perceived as kind and who exercised patience and restraint. This restraint also referred to the efforts of the significant other to control tendencies toward harsh, impulsive expressions of anger, to control inclinations to make fun of, belittle, be unduly critical of, yell at, or threaten the boy. Positive self-feelings were evoked toward an important other who tried to be reasonable, rational, fair, someone who tried to sincerely listen in discourse.

The subjects described behaviors of significant others that engendered and enhanced good feelings within the self. Such behaviors referred to the others' abundant expressions of compliments and recognitions for "small," day-to-day occurrences; for others' offering reassurance, encouragement, and assistance when "needed" and/or requested. To the surprise of some parents, the boys expressed appreciation for, and security in parental efforts in establishing and holding to basic rules, to insisting that the young adolescent do basic things that were good for him (e.g., school work, getting to bed on time). The boys made a clear distinction between such a stance and one

in which the significant adults are unnecessarily strict, bossy, and authoritarian. Fathers, in particular, should examine tendencies to tease in ways that are experienced by the boys as demeaning. The boys reported that their self-regard/self-esteem was enhanced and that they highly valued the times when they were with their fathers doing mutually enjoyable things. Mothers, on the other hand, should examine inclinations to accuse and blame because of its disruptive influence on self-regard/self esteem.

Applications and Considerations for Improving Peer Relationships

The following ideas, derived from the study findings, can be used to guide the efforts of the early adolescent males, or someone trying to assist them in improving peer relationships. As with most change processes, it is most effective to begin with the self of the subjects. The boys need to apply honest self-scrutiny and sensitivity in considering how they treat important others. The young adolescents should consider, for example, how they handle feelings of irritation and anger. Are they prone to be too harsh, too "pushy," to use depreciation to convey irritation? Do they refrain from doing and saying things that hurt feelings? (Examples: name-calling, put-downs, belittlements, making fun of, teasing, "rubbing it in.") Three study subjects succinctly expressed the point. "Treat the other person as you want to be treated." The boys also need to examine tendencies to brag and to modulate them if necessary.

There are other things that the early adolescents can do in their interpersonal relationships with valued peer-others that have been

found to engender appreciation and positive self-feelings in the important others. They should be alert to opportunities to compliment the other when he has done something well or that is liked or appreciated. These compliments do not need to be elaborate; at times they may be non-verbal (e.g., a pat on the back). They are most effective when made in the moment, in relationship to small achievements. The boys should be alert to opportunities to do something for this important other, to offer encouragement and/or assistance when the other is struggling. When possible, they should include and invite the peer-other into activities; often mutual interests can serve as a common link. They should be alert to any of their behaviors that important others might experience as being ignored, being overlooked, or not being considered.

Application of Findings to Clinical Work

There are at least four ways that these results can be applied to clinical work. First, the recommendations presented as "Applications and Considerations for Persons Interacting With Early Adolescent Males" and the "Applications and Considerations for Improving Peer Relationships" can be used by a professional (e.g., a clinician) in helping clients. For example, when dealing with parents who are in turmoil with their early adolescent son, or an early adolescent boy who is having regular peer conflicts, the helping person could use these ideas to assist in identifying the areas of conflict, and the areas of interpersonal behaviors in need of remediation.

Second, some of the questions in the format could be used to

enhance understanding and to implement interventions with clients, and could be integrated into a multi-method diagnostic approach. These questions evoked enthusiastic and revealing replies from the early adolescents, and the responses were more elaborate than responses to conventional clinical approaches. Question 1 asked for ". . . words or phrases that you would use to describe (significant others)." It elicited revealing responses and demonstrated the subjects' level of self-other perceptions. Questions 2 and 3 asked subjects to discuss their likes and dislikes of significant others, and the subjects readily responded to the request. These responses allowed the interviewer to observe how the subjects dealt with discrepant perceptions and ambivalent feelings toward these important persons. Questions 7 and 8 asked the subjects to consider how they would, and would not, treat someone like themselves if they were the parent. The inquiry produced responses that were easy to operationalize. Jack, one of the case examples, provided a good illustration of this point.

> His response was immediate and clear as to what he would do if he were a parent to someone like himself. When asked to further define ". . . show love . . . show caring, . . ." he went on to describe a variety of things that the parents could do with him, places that they could take him, that he would experience as expressions of love and caring.

Questions 11 and 12, which asked the subjects to tell how they thought their parents would describe them, also elicited valuable information and provided valuable insights into this important contributor to self-regard. Responses provided insights about the relative balance between positive and negative projected other-perceptions, the degree to which these believed other-perceptions about the self were relatively benign

or harsh, and the degree to which these perceptions were relatively circumscribed or over-generalized.

Throughout the study, subjects revealed the dislikes, angers, and hurts that they experienced, and the difficulties they had in dealing with the ways that significant others, especially males, handled and expressed their anger. It also has been recognized and studies have reported that "both parents and adolescents agree that the greatest amount of 'turmoil' in their lives occurred between ages 12 to 14" (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 236). It is predictable, therefore, that anger, and the management and expression of it, are going to be important issues. So third, the clinician can apply this information in two ways: first, by recognizing that anger and its expression are very likely to be issues between the early adolescent male and his significant others, and second, by helping both parties learn healthy, "non-toxic" ways of dealing with such feelings. The same point relates to the issues of communication to be discussed in the next section.

The findings of this study made it clear that responses from, and interactions with significant others were, at times, disturbing and diminishing of self-regard/self-esteem; that these early adolescents, at times, experienced "negative" feedback from their significant others. Bednar et al. (1989) believed that a helping person (e.g., parent or therapist) must assist the child in realizing that "negative as well as positive feedback is an accepted ingredient, shortcomings are an essential part of being human, and displeasure, even rejection [by] some people is to be expected and accepted" (p. 272). So fourth, with this frame of reference, the helping person can assist others in finding

effective ways to "inoculate . . . [against the] debilitation of negative feedback" (p. 58).

Other Related Issues

The Issue of Communication of Self-Needs

Two important, but somewhat incongruent, observations evolved from the process of listening to these subjects. On the one hand these boys were quite introspective and had well-developed abilities to discuss some of their more intimate thoughts and feelings. As was concluded from the data, "their awareness of and involvement in their internal lives was significantly more extensive than they revealed to the external world." There seemed to be a substantial gap between the range and intensity of these important self-needs and wishes, and the degree to which subjects communicated them to their significant others. Subjects seemed to give little consideration to the idea of communicating such unmet needs. Such an option did not seem to be part of their experience; it was not something that they had been taught and/or saw modeled in their families or other life experiences. Some considered, and made efforts toward attempting to influence the other by indirect manipulation, but essentially they saw themselves as helpless. If a significant other had not satisfied their important self-needs and/or had threatened them, there was little that they could do. Similarly, they had not considered giving positive feedback to their significant others for behaviors that were self-enhancing. These same characteristics were observed by King (1979) in his study of normal adolescents. There was, however, a mutual response system operative

between adult and adolescent and adolescent to adolescent. It seemed based upon reactions to situational clues, non-verbal communications, and empathy and intuition, rather than more direct verbal communications.

The issue of communicating self-needs invites further work and study. First, this finding suggests that children need help in being more able and more comfortable in directly communicating their self-wishes and reactions to the significant others in their lives. Second, it raises questions concerning the reasons for adolescents' belief that they cannot talk openly with adults about such important self-issues.

The Issue of Private Space for the Early Adolescent

It became very clear that these boys perceived their rooms as special places, serving important functions. This was the place that they commonly "went to" to obtain needed isolation, to reflect, to plan, to divert, to calm down, to try to diminish upset and hurt. While not reflected in the formal data, it was very apparent in listening to these subjects and their references, that having a private space as a source of psychological comfort was very helpful. It is important that adults, if possible, provide such a place, respect it, and have some appreciation of its purposes.

Issues Related to the Instrument, Particular Methodology, and Possible Modifications

Earlier in this study the question was raised concerning the efficacy of this approach. Would the effort, with the investment of time and resources, be justified by the outcome? This researcher

believes that it has been. The fact that the approach yielded the quantity and quality of data that supported, contributed to, and enlarged upon previous related research testifies to the validity and viability of such an approach in the study of self-issues. In the judgment of this researcher and other experienced researchers and clinicians familiar with this study, this kind of instrument--format when combined with this approach and in the hands of a trained interviewer has basic merit. However, an instrument, such as this, needs review, refinement, and revision. It would be of interest to have similarly trained interviewers use such an instrument, examine those results, and get feedback from the interviewers. As a result of this experience, several recommendations can be made in regard to the format, "On Significant Others." First, Questions 5 and 6 should be combined when studying peer significant others, since they yielded very similar data. ("What sorts of things might _____ do--or say--that could result in your feeling ANNOYED or MAD?" and "What sorts of things might _____ do--or say--that could result in your feeling UPSET or HURT?") Second, because of the similarity of results, it would be more practical to present Questions 1 through 6 in regard to peer significant others rather than apply this set of questions separately for peer Choice One and Two. Third, specific questions and issues related to handling anger could be studied more in-depth. The varied replies of the subjects revealed that the frequency and intensity of such troubling interactions varied from subject to subject. How, to what degree, and under what circumstances do these communications disrupt and damage self-regard/ self-esteem? Such knowledge also would be valuable in helping others

develop and refine good interpersonal communication skills. Part of the instrument could also be used for other purposes, as supplements to other research studies and/or in conjunction with the use of related formal instruments.

Miles and Huberman (1986) recommended getting feedback from informants, a form of "phenomenological validity" (p. 242). The circumstances and timing of this study made it impossible to augment that excellent idea. The researcher has agreed, however, to discuss these findings in group meetings with the subjects and their parents. One important goal of such meetings will be to elicit valuable feedback.

APPENDIX A

FORMAT--ON SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

FORMAT - ON SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

(Instructions to Interviewer: Fill out face sheet for Data Collection Section)

Instructions to Subjects:

I want to talk with you about people who are important to you.

By "important" I mean -- people who can, or who do—

-- affect the way that you see yourself.
-- affect the way that you feel about yourself.

Remember, they can affect you either way —

-- at times they can help you feel better about yourself.
-- at times they can contribute to your feeling worse about yourself.

A. What three (3) ADULTS, then come to your mind -- as people who can affect the way that you see yourself, or can affect the way that you feel about yourself?

(Record responses on "Adult" section of data sheet.)

B. What three (3) KIDS, then come to your mind -- as kids who can affect the way that you see yourself or can affect the way that you feel about yourself?

(Record responses on "Kids" section of data sheet.)

Instructions to Interviewer:

Note the first two ADULTS selected — Choice 1 and Choice 2.

(a) Apply the following questions, 1-6, to Choice 1.

(b) After completing that process, go through question 1-6 for choice 2.

Then, note the first two KIDS selected.

Go through the same procedure described above, (a) and (b), in reference to them.

Record all information on the Data Collection Section provided.

1. What words or phrases come to mind——what words or phrases would you use to describe _____?

   Please list at least five of these descriptors.

2. What are two (2) things about ____ that you like BEST?

3. What are two (2) things about ____ that you like least or even DISLIKE?

4. What sorts of things might ____ do -- or say -- that could result in you feeling GOOD about yourself or liking yourself even more?

5. What sorts of things might ____ do -- or say -- that could result in you feeling ANNOYED or MAD?

6. What sorts of things might ____ do -- or say -- that could result in you feeling UPSET or HURT?

Instructions to Subjects:

Let's pretend a bit -- let's turn things around.

7. If you were your PARENT, what sorts of things would you do, how would you treat (you/subject's name) to help you to feel BETTER--to help you feel GOOD--about yourself?

8. If you were your PARENT, what sorts of things would you NOT do, how would you try NOT to treat (you/subject's name) so that you would not end up feeling UPSET, HURT, or ANGRY?

9. If you were your good FRIEND, what sorts of things would you do, how would you treat (you/subject's name) to help you to feel BETTER-to help you feel GOOD--about yourself?

10. If you were your good FRIEND, what sorts of things would you NOT do, how would you try NOT to treat (you/subject's name) so that you would not end up feeling UPSET, HURT, or ANGRY?

11. If I asked your MOTHER to describe you, what would she say -- what words or phrases do you think that she would use?

12. If I asked your FATHER to describe you, what would he say -- what words or phrases do you think that he would use?

Now let's talk about a related topic. That is,

-- how you try to deal with the feelings that you sometimes have,
-- when you are around the people that you listed and talked about.

---

13. Think of the times when you were feeling HURT, EMBARRASSED, or ANGRY---how did you try to deal with the feelings that you were having?

14. Think of the times when you were feeling PROUD, SUCCESSFUL, (or maybe SMART)---really good about yourself---how did you try to handle the feelings that you were having?

(What was---or what is---your style?)

---

15. How do you <u>generally</u> try to CALM yourself---STEADY yourself---when you are feeling very INTENSE (e.g. keyed up, a bit "hyper", or excited)?

16. (a) If you have been feeling lots of STRESS, under much PRESSURE---perhaps really WORRIED---what do you do?

(After they answer the question, add --)

(b) Who might you turn to?

APPENDIX B

DATA COLLECTION SECTION

DATA COLLECTION SECTION

ON SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Name_____

B.D._____Sch. Gr._____

School_____

Parental situation (natural parents?)_____

_____

(Referral Source_____)

********ADULTS********

A. "The three adults...who can affect the way that you see yourself...the way that you feel about yourself"

(1)_____ (2)_____

(3)_____

1. "What words or phrases...would you use to describe_____?" (5 descriptors)

2. "What are two (2) things about____that you like BEST?"

3. "What are two (2) things about____that you like least or even DISLIKE?"

4. "What sorts of things might____do--or say--that could result in you feeling GOOD about yourself, or liking yourself even more?"

5. "What sorts of things might____do--or say--that could result in you feeling ANNOYED or MAD?"

6. "What sorts of things might____do--or say--that could result in you feeling UPSET or HURT?"

********KIDS********

B. "The three kids...who can affect the way that you see yourself...the way that you feel about yourself?"

(1)_____ (2)_____

(3)_____

1. "What words or phrases...would you use to describe_____?" (5 descriptors)

2. "What are two (2) things about____that you like BEST?"

3. "What are two (2) things about____that you like least or even DISLIKE?"

4. "What sorts of things might____do--or say--that could result in you feeling GOOD about yourself, or liking yourself even more?"

5. "What sorts of things might____do--or say--that could result in you feeling ANNOYED or MAD?"

6. "What sorts of things might____do--or say--that could result in you feeling UPSET or HURT?"

7. "If you were your PARENT, what sorts of things would you do, how would you treat (you/subject's name) to help you to feel BETTER --to help you feel GOOD---about yourself?"

8. "If you were your PARENT, what sorts of things would you NOT do, how would you try NOT to treat (you/subject's name) so that you would not end up feeling UPSET, HURT, or ANGRY?"

9. "If you were your good FRIEND, what sorts of things would you do, how would you treat (you/subject's name) to help you to feel BETTER ---to help you feel GOOD ---about yourself?"

10. "If you were your good FRIEND, what sorts of things would you NOT do, how would you try NOT totreat (you/subject's name) so that you would not end up feeling UPSET, HURT, or ANGRY?"

11. "If I asked your MOTHER to describe you, what would she say--- what words or phrases do you think that she would use?"

12. "If I asked your FATHER to describe you, what would he say---what words or phrases do you think he would use?"

13. "Think of the times when you were feeling HURT, EMBARRASSED, or ANGRY---how did you try to deal with the feelings that you were having?"

14. "Think of the times when you were feeling PROUD, SUCCESSFUL, (or maybe SMART)---really good about yourself---how did you try to handle the feelings that you were having?"

(What was---or what is---your style?)

15. "How do you generally try to CALM yourself---STEADY yourself---when you are feeling very INTENSE (e.g. keyed up, a bit "hyper", or excited?")

16. (a) If you have been feeling lots of STRESS, under much PRESSURE---perhaps really WORRIED---what do you do?"

(b) Who might you turn to?"

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS/REACTIONS OF INTERVIEWER

Assessment of subject's attempt at serious, genuine, thoughtful response?

Reactions, feelings about quality and tone of relationship while with subject?

Questions that subject was slow to answer, struggled with, answered incompletely, or superficially?

Questions to pursue later?

APPENDIX C

ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE (RSE)

ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE (RSE)

Directions: Circle the choice that is most true for you.

SA--strongly agree
A--agree
D--disagree
SD--strongly disagree

(1)	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	SA	A	D*	SD*
(2)	At times I think I am no good at all.	SA*	A*	D	SD
(3)	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA	A	D*	SD*
(4)	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	SA	A	D*	SD*
(5)	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	SA*	A*	D	SD
(6)	I certainly feel useless at times.	SA*	A*	D	SD
(7)	I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	SA	A	D*	SD*
(8)	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	SA*	A*	D	SD
(9)	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	SA*	A*	D	SD
(10)	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	SA	A	D*	SD*

APPENDIX D

LEARNING ABOUT THE "SIGNIFICANT (IMPORTANT) OTHERS" IN THE LIFE OF A YOUNG ADOLESCENT MALE

RICHARD HERBIG
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(312) 482-8172

72nd & Webster
Downers Grove, IL 60516

LEARNING ABOUT THE "SIGNIFICANT (IMPORTANT) OTHERS" IN THE LIFE OF A YOUNG ADOLESCENT MALE

To the young adolescent and his parents:

As part of some advanced training, I am in the process of doing a study for Loyola University. We call it an "exploratory" study because basically we are trying to learn more about---

(a) Who are the people (adults and peers) that this age boy identifies as the most important people ("significant others") in his life.

More importantly, we want to learn more about---

(b) What is it about these "significant others" (for example, their behavior, attitudes, functions, meaning to the boy?) that gives them their importance (significance).

SOME QUESTIONS THAT YOU MIGHT BE HAVING?

Who am I?--- Some of you know me or know of me; some of you do not. Professionally, I am a psychotherapist (in private practice.) I have twenty-plus years experience working with a wide diversity of individuals, small groups, and institutions. Because of my specialized training, and the way that I have come to be known in the professional community, I do a large part of my work with kids and their families.

I did my graduate work at, and am a graduate of, the University of Pennsylvania and the (Chicago) Institute for Psychoanalysis. I have done post-graduate work at the University of Chicago, the Family Institute of Chicago, and am currently finishing my doctoral work at Loyola. As part of my professional activities, I regularly consult, supervise, teach and make public presentations. I have four kids of my own--who have taught me a thing or two about development, parenting, and humility.

How will I go about trying to get answers to those two questions above?
I will be following a questionnaire that I have developed. It has about twenty rather open ended questions on it. Such as --"What are two things about (adult/peer) that you like best.....like least?"

OR

"If you were your parent (or best friend) how would you treat you to help you feel good about yourself?.....What sorts of things would you NOT do, how would you NOT treat yourself so that you wouldn't feel upset, hurt, or angry?"

What makes me think that I will get pertinent information?

(1) I have been interviewing, talking to, counseling with kids this age for twenty-plus years. I like them and respect them and have truly learned a lot from them. We usually feel reasonably comfortable with each other. Part of my training and developed skill is to help them spell out what they are trying to say.

(2) We will also have from three to five meetings as necessary. This will allow both of us to feel more comfortable and unhurried.

(3) I have tried out and refined the questionnaire with about thirty other kids this age. They generally are even more cooperative, eager, thoughtful and sharing than I had expected.

So of what use might this information be?

We know--need I tell you--that certain people are very important in our life and have much to do with how we see ourselves and how we feel about ourselves. Yet, surprisingly, very little formal study has been given to--

(1) What is it about these "significant others" that makes them so?

We also are aware that what is important to us, what is significant to us about an important individual in our life varies with different ages and stages that we go through.

(2) With these young adolescent males, what are the SPECIFIC things about these "significant others" that makes them so important to the self-perception and self-esteem of this age person?

What can you expect of me?

(1) Respect for your child, his thoughts and feelings and his privacy.

(2) Availability to you if you have questions about the study.

(3) Some eventual feedback from me about the OVERALL findings of the study when the research has been completed and carefully analyzed. I would estimate that that would be about a year from now.

What can you NOT expect from me?

(1) I will NOT discuss with others--including parents--specific responses that a boy shares with me. I hope that you understand that I have to--and want to

respect his privacy. I believe that he is entitled to that as a person, but it is also important to his feeling reasonably trusting of me.

Also, this is not a study of individual "cases". It is a study of a particular group and its common experiences and perceptions.

As a routine requirement, I will need a signed consent for participation. Would you sign the one attached and have your boy bring it with him.

I thank you for your consideration and cooperation. If you wish to talk with me, I can be reached at 482-8172 (or leave a message if I'm unavailable.)

Sincerely,

Richard Herbig

RH:jmr
Attachment

APPENDIX E

CONSENT LETTER

RICHARD HERBIG
521 S. LaGrange Rd.
LaGrange, Ill. 60525
(482-8172)

I, the parent or guardian of _____

_____, give my permission for him to participate in this research study being conducted by Richard Herbig.

I understand that the study

---will consist of my child having several meetings with Richard Herbig.

---that he will be asked to give his views about important people in his life.

---that this information will be confidential, i.e., not to be shared with others.

---that we can feel free to withdraw from the study at any time.

When the study has been completed and compiled, these findings will be about the group that was studied. They will not be findings about particular individuals in the study. Herbig will make these group findings available to us at that time.

_____
(Signature of parent or guardian)

_____
(Address) (Phone number)

_____
(Date)

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VITA

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APPROVAL SHEET

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the Graduate School and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with Reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

January 23, 1991 Ann McCreary Juhasz
Date Director's Signature